

Sharif Zeid returns from Yemen

AMMAN (Petra) — Royal Court Chief Sharif Zeid Ben Shaker returned home Monday after a one-day visit to Yemen during which he conferred with Yemeni President Ali Abdullah Saleh and Vice President Ali Salem Al Beedh. He was accompanied by Dr. Khalid Al Karaki, His Majesty the King's advisor, and Major-General 'Id Kamel Al Rousan, assistant chief of staff for operations and training. Sharif Zeid conveyed to President Saleh good wishes of King Hussein and his keenness to ensure that Yemen will transcend its current crisis and continue its nationalist march as well as its achievements with regard to unity, democracy, and progress. The two sides discussed the aspects of the crisis, means to attain comprehensive solutions, and the importance of the national dialogue currently under way in Yemen. Sharif Zeid expressed Jordan's continued keenness to provide assistance and opinion, to the Yemeni brothers where this falls within the framework of the distinguished relations between the two countries.

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Syrian Jews coming back from U.S.

DAMASCUS (AFP) — More than 100 Syrian Jews have returned after being allowed to travel and spending more than a year in the United States, the head of the Jewish community said Monday. He also told AFP that almost a third of Syrian Jews, or about 1,250 out of 4,000, had opted to stay in Syria since Damascus agreed in 1992 to allow applicants for exit visas to leave with their families. "We can get passports valid for six years and a multi-exit visa for one year without a bank guarantee for our return," said Rabbi Ibrahim Hamra. Around 110 Syrian Jews have returned from the United States, he said. The Rabbi explained that travellers faced language and work problems, adding that most of the Jews who left did not sell off their assets "in the hope of returning to the country." Most Syrian Jews work in the gold, silver, leather, ready-made clothing and handicraft trades. A Jewish boutique owner in Damascus, Yusef Jajati, said he had no plans to leave the country. "We have prosperity here that we cannot find elsewhere," he explained.

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Regent meets expatriate leader

AMMAN (Petra) — His Royal Highness Prince Mohammad Ben Talal, the Regent, Monday received at Al Manal Palace the president of the Jordanian Expatriates Society in Australia, Samir Al Abhasi. Mr. Abhasi conveyed to Prince Mohammad the greetings of the Jordanian community in Australia and their appreciation of His Majesty King Hussein's efforts to maintain their links to their homeland and his concern for their problems. The meeting was attended by Upper House of Parliament Speaker Ahmad Al Lawzi.

Majali visits Isra'a Wal Mi'raj exhibition

AMMAN (Petra) — Prime Minister Abdul Salam Majali Monday visited an exhibition held by the Ministry of Awqaf and Islamic Affairs at the King Abdullah Mosque in Amman to mark Al Isra'a Wal Mi'raj. The exhibition highlights the keenness of the Hashemite family on preserving and renovating the burial sites of the Prophet Mohammad's companions in all parts of Jordan. The prime minister was briefed by Awqaf and Islamic Affairs Minister Abdul Salam Al Abadi on the achievements of the ministry in Jordan and the Israeli-occupied West Bank.

U.S. commerce secretary due here

AMMAN (Petra) — American Secretary of Commerce Ron Brown will arrive in Amman next Monday on a short visit to Jordan. The American official will meet with the ministers of planning, finance and industry and trade for talks on bilateral relations in economic and commercial fields.

Spanish official arrives today

AMMAN (Petra) — Under-Secretary of the Spanish Foreign Ministry Francisco Villar is due in Amman Tuesday on a two-day official visit to Jordan. Mr. Villar will hold talks with Prime Minister Abdul Salam Majali, Lower House of Parliament Speaker Taher Al Masi and senior Jordanian officials on bilateral relations.

Gaza grenade hurts Israeli troops

OCCUPIED GAZA (R) — Two Israeli soldiers were wounded on Monday when a grenade was thrown at a camera crew filming the occupied Gaza Strip for the army ahead of a planned troop pull-out, state radio said. An army spokesman confirmed that a soldier and paramilitary border policeman accompanying a TV crew were lightly wounded by a fragmentation grenade in the Khan Younis refugee camp. He said the members of the camera crew were unhurt, but declined to give further details. The radio said the TV crew was working for the army documenting events in the strip before the delayed army pull-out, which was to have begun four weeks ago.

Tunis names March 20 as election day

TUNIS (R) — The Tunisian government Monday formally set presidential and parliamentary elections for March 20. President Zine Al Abidine Ben Ali signed decrees fixing the date and the rules for the campaign, an official statement said. Officials had already said the elections would be held on March 20 and all seven recognised parties have said they would run in the parliamentary poll.

Rifkind in Riyadh

RIYADH (AFP) — British Defence Secretary Malcolm Rifkind arrived here Monday for talks on the fate of multi-billion dollar defence contracts in the light of Saudi Arabia's financial difficulties. Mr. Rifkind was to have talks with his Saudi counterpart, Prince Sultan Ben Abdul Aziz, on "bilateral defence cooperation," a British diplomatic source said.

Jordan hopes peace talks lead to independent Palestinian state

Economic accord with PLO sets out clear-cut definition of relationship — Majali

By Nermeen Murad
 Jordan Times Staff Reporter

AMMAN — In the most forthcoming statement to date since the signing of the Oslo accord, the prime minister yesterday said Jordan would like to see the emergence of an independent Palestinian state as the final outcome of negotiations between Israel and the PLO. "We hope that the talks would lead to the creation of an independent Palestinian state," Dr. Abdul Salam Majali told a group of journalists and diplomats who met with him in his office yesterday. Palestinians had accused Jordan that it did not want the creation of an independent state as the reason for the delay in signing a draft economic agreement that was to lay detailed plans for economic cooperation between Jordan and the covenanted Palestinian authority for autonomy in the occupied territories.

Despite repeated assurances by His Majesty King Hussein that Jordan had no political designs over the West Bank and it stands committed to its 1988 decision to sever legal and administrative ties with the Israeli-occupied territories, the PLO did not sign the agreement.

The Kingdom along with many Arab and foreign countries had consistently expressed hope that the Middle East

peace negotiations would achieve "Palestinian aspirations," but they stopped short of endorsing a Palestinian state as the final outcome of the talks. The prime minister's statement yesterday was thus seen as the first statement by a high-ranking Jordanian official as specifically speaking of an independent state since the PLO secretly negotiated with Israel in Oslo leading to the signing of the declaration of principles in Washington.

Jordanian observers believe that the statement by the premier was especially significant because it was timed only days after Jordan and the PLO signed an economic accord after repeated delays apparently because the PLO wanted to ensure that the accord preserved the integrity of its independent authority and provided for symbols of sovereignty over the Israeli-occupied territories.

The statement, according to observers, seemed to top a series of measures and moves that Jordan had undertaken to underline that it had no political ambitions over the West Bank and was still committed to its long-held policies of supporting Palestinian rights to self-determination and statehood.

Jordan, according to analysts, had sought to soothe Palestinian fears about the Kingdom being not committed



Abdul Salam Majali

to supporting the PLO in its quest for the creation of an independent Palestinian state.

Dr. Majali told the "Monday circle" group that after the signing of the agreement between Jordan and the PLO he felt confident that both parties could continue their negotiations with Israel with a clear-cut definition of their relationship.

He said that the Jordan-PLO accord is not supposed to be judged by what it might give either side but by what should be seen as a normal progression of partnership which will give the PLO a "better bargaining position in their negotiations with Israel."

He appeared to be referring to criticism that the agreement

fell far short of Jordanian expectations and provided for major concessions to the PLO from Jordan.

Underlining that the newly signed agreement provided a framework of cooperation which should have been in place "two years ago," Dr. Majali said that now the "PLO can continue negotiations with Israel while it has clear-cut and defined relations with Jordan."

The prime minister also expressed optimism about major progress being made in the Syrian-Israeli track of negotiations saying that he expected "something serious" to come out of the meeting between Syrian President Hafez Al Assad and U.S. President Bill Clinton scheduled for Jan. 16 in Geneva.

He said Jordan would consider the success of the Syrian-Israeli negotiations a success for the Kingdom including any further success on the Palestinian-Israeli track of talks.

"We consider any success on any track to be a success for us," said Dr. Majali in the question and answer meeting at the Prime Ministry. He added that the progress in the Palestinian track and the expected progress in talks between Israel and Syria all fall within Jordan's hopes for comprehensive peace.

He said that a possible

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General Amnon Shahak (left), head of the Israeli delegation, and his Palestinian counterpart Nabil Shaath shake hands Monday prior to the beginning of the new round of autonomy negotiations in the Egyptian resort of Taba (AFP photo)

Israel, PLO may not meet April 13 deadline — Beilin

Autonomy negotiations resume in Taba

TABA, Egypt (Agencies) — Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO) may not meet an April 13 deadline for the full withdrawal of Israeli troops from the Gaza Strip and the West Bank town of Jericho, a senior Israeli official said Monday.

His remarks came as Israeli and Palestinian negotiators convened in the Egyptian Red Sea resort of Taba after a three-week breach brought on by differences, principally over border security.

Palestinian chief delegate Nabil Shaath was more optimistic, saying agreement could be reached in three weeks. "We have to finish as soon as possible and we are ready," he told reporters. "I know exactly what difficulties are and I know they are solvable."

Dr. Shaath insisted that the April 13th deadline envisaged when the accord was signed in September be met.

"The way it looks now, we won't meet that date because

of the stops and starts in the negotiations, Deputy Foreign Minister Yossi Beilin told Israel Radio.

It would be the second deadline the negotiators missed in the first stages of Palestinian self-rule. The Israelis were scheduled to begin their withdrawal on Dec. 13, but balked over unresolved security issues.

"There are many topics, many details on the schedule, security, defending the settlements in Gaza, details that we haven't even touched yet," Mr. Beilin said.

Israeli officials now argue April 13 is not a deadline since the Oslo agreement does not monitor it specifically. The accord says withdrawal should be completed four months after the terms are agreed upon.

The Israeli delegation, led by General Amnon Shahak, entered the resort hotel here without talking to reporters.

Dr. Shaath accused Israel of lacking goodwill and hit out at

Environment Minister Yossi Sarid who said Sunday that he expected the negotiations to last two months.

"It is sad when publicly you say it will take two months. It is violating the agreement," Dr. Shaath said.

Israel Foreign Minister Shimon Peres warned there were no target dates. "We will take four months after the signing of the agreement," to complete the withdrawal, Mr. Peres told Israel Radio.

Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin told Israel Radio: "Don't expect a breakthrough in Taba in the coming days." He stressed there were "no sacred dates" in the autonomy deal and that the essential thing was to secure a firm and detailed accord in implementing self-rule.

Israeli delegation spokesman Colonel Ami Gluska was also on a different wavelength to the PLO team in Taba. "I think Mr. Shaath's

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Settlers block bridge traffic



A Jewish settler waving Israeli flags Monday stops a bus transporting Palestinians across the River Jordan via the King Hussein Bridge (AFP photo)

KING HUSSEIN BRIDGE, occupied West Bank (Agencies) — Herb grower Eitan Rahimpur, along with a few dozen fellow Jewish settlers, blocked traffic at this crossing for an hour Monday to protest the Israel-Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO) talks on Palestinian autonomy.

"We are not hudding from here," Mr. Rahimpur and his friends chanted, Israeli flags fluttering over their heads, as four Palestinian buses headed for Jordan waited by the roadside.

But moments later, after the TV cameras stopped rolling, Mr. Rahimpur sounded much less sure about his future in Naama, a communal farm just four kilometres north of Jericho, the future seat of Palestinian administration.

"There isn't much hope, and we know this," Mr. Rahimpur said of the autonomy talks that resumed Monday in the Egyptian resort of Taba. "In the end, there won't be a choice, and we'll leave."

Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin does not want to dismantle any of the 144 settlements now. He wants to avoid setting precedents that would weaken Israeli bargaining positions once negotiations on the final status of the occupied territories begin in mid-1996.

When Mr. Rabin visited Naama last week, accompanied by army brass and peace negotiators, he told the settlers in the crowded clubhouse that he wanted them to stay put. But he acknowledged they had "justification to be worried" and did not make any promises that they could stay beyond the next five years.

In Monday's protest, the settlers' confusion and tension were evident. When soldiers tried to block their path, one demonstrator yelled, "stop autonomy, not us."

Syria, Egypt and GCC call Israel-PLO accord a first step

DAMASCUS (Agencies) — The foreign ministers of Syria, Egypt and six oil-rich Gulf states stressed Monday that the Israel-Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO) peace accord should be followed by similar moves on the other Middle East peace tracks.

"The ministers have reviewed the peace process in the Middle East and its developments since the signing of the PLO-Israel declaration of principles, being a first step that should be completed by similar steps on the other tracks for achieving just and comprehensive peace in the region," the statement said.

Syria has been critical till now of the Israel-PLO deal. It said the ministers, during two days of deliberations, underscored the importance of Sunday's planned summit meeting in Geneva between Presidents Hafez Al Assad and Bill Clinton and voiced their countries' strong support for the Syrian leader.

They also expressed their hope that the Geneva summit would bring about a comprehensive Middle East peace based on U.N. Security Council resolutions, including a full Israeli withdrawal from occupied Arab lands.

The eight states meeting here were signatories of the March 6, 1991 Damascus declaration, which was billed as a collective security pact under which tens of thousands of Syrian and Egyptian troops would have formed the core of a force to defend the Gulf countries.

The alliance was designed to prevent a repetition of a disaster such as the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait, but its military component was never put into effect and the pact now serves mainly as a forum for political and economic coordination.

The final statement issued after the meeting here made only a passing reference to the Damascus Declaration. It said the ministers expressed satisfaction over the implementation of recommendations made at their June meeting in Abu Dhabi calling for reactivating

political and economic coordination.

Sources close to the two-day meeting said disagreements between the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) — Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Qatar, Bahrain, Oman and the United Arab Emirates — stood in the way of military cooperation.

However, Syria Foreign Minister Farouk Al Sbaraa said the views of the eight "coincided on key issues and there were no major disagreements."

On Sunday, Mr. Sbaraa said security matters would be raised among the signatories on a bilateral basis.

The final statement on Monday said only that the ministers agreed to "give a new boost to political and economic cooperation in accordance with the Damascus declaration principles."

The oil-rich Gulf states have not provided the \$10 billion in

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NATO formally invites former foes to join as limited partners

BRUSSELS (Agencies) — U.S. President Bill Clinton and other North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) leaders Monday formally invited their former Warsaw Pact rivals to become limited partners in the Western military alliance.

But worries about Russian nationalism and frustration over Bosnia clouded the first day of the NATO summit.

"The door is open," declared British Prime Minister John Major, saying the action clearly could lead to the admission of new members to NATO. German Chancellor Helmut Kohl said it was a "serious step on the way" to increasing the size of the alliance.

At a ceremony marking a turning point for the 44-year-old alliance, the leaders signed a U.S. "Partnership for Peace" plan that will draw the East European nations closer — but without granting them full membership.

In the partnership invitation, the leaders said: "Active participation in the partnership for peace will play an important role in the evolutionary process of the expansion of NATO."

The leaders said they wanted "to strengthen ties with the democratic states to our east." The alliance, they said, "remains open to the membership of other European states in a position... to contribute to the security of the North Atlantic area."

"Today, we are marking a historic initiative of our alliance," said NATO Secretary-General Manfred Woerner as he asked the leaders to sign two documents, one in English

and one in French. Aides circulated the blue folders among the allied under the table and they signed in alphabetical order. Mr. Clinton was the last to sign. He made no remarks.

Mr. Woerner wound up the brief ceremony by saying, "Thank you very much. It's over."

The summit was set to adopt a general statement affirming the leaders "expect and would welcome NATO expansion" eastward but without providing a list of possible candidates or fixing a timetable.

NATO officials have stressed the need to go slow on enlargement for fear of isolating and antagonising Russia, which is fiercely opposed to its one-time Warsaw pact allies joining the Atlantic alliance.

The partnership scheme was not likely to satisfy countries such as Poland, Hungary and the Czech Republic which are eager to climb under NATO's security umbrella in the face of rising nationalism in Russia.

All reluctantly agreed to the cooperation programme as a first step. Czech President Vaclav Havel urged the alliance Sunday to switch to "a higher gear, show more courage and generosity" on the membership question.

In Warsaw, Polish President Lech Walesa urged NATO to start imposing conditions on Russia to test its credibility as a future participant in the plan.

On Bosnia, Mr. Clinton told the allies. "We have to mean it" if the alliance threatens military action to end Serb attacks in the war-torn region.

Clinton announces nuclear breakthrough

BRUSSELS (AP) — President Bill Clinton announced Monday that Ukraine will sign an agreement Friday with the United States and Russia to eliminate all nuclear weapons from its soil.

"This is a hopeful and historic breakthrough," Mr. Clinton said at a news conference in Brussels.

"This trilateral agreement we will sign will lead to the complete removal of nuclear weapons from Ukraine," Mr. Clinton said.

The president announced that he would fly to the Ukrainian capital of Kiev for a brief visit with Ukrainian President Leonid Kravchuk before he meets with Mr. Kravchuk and Russian President Boris Yeltsin for the signing ceremonies in Moscow.

The accord will dismantle the third-largest nuclear arsenal in the world — more than 1,000 warheads — and marks a major advance in the president's drive to reverse the proliferation of nuclear weapons.

It was concluded after long and difficult negotiations involving the United States, Ukraine and Russia. Ukraine had hesitated to surrender the weapons, a residue of Soviet power, while Russia retains a sizeable arsenal.

British aid worker kidnapped in Somalia

MOGADISHU (Agencies) — Unidentified Somali abducted a British U.N. aid worker as he walked to his office Monday, the latest in a string of attacks on humanitarian agencies.

The U.N. World Food Programme (WFP) employee, whose name was not released pending notification of the family, was dragged into a sedan that had been parked near the WFP office in Mogadishu, agency officials said.

But in a broadcast Monday monitored in London, the BBC identified the abducted worker as Calum Gardar.

There was no official word of a ransom demand or other contact with the abductors. "We're in the dark," said one WFP employee who did not give his name.

U.N. officials were conducting their own investigation as well as coordinating with the Somali police in an effort to find the kidnapped employee.

"We are in the process of gathering information now," said Adishw Paderath, the acting U.N. civilian spokesman.

U.S. and U.N. military officials have received sporadic intelligence reports over the last two months indicating that American or other U.N. employees could be the target of kidnaps.

The aid agencies have been hit with a rash of other attacks in recent weeks as the United Nations has contemplated whether to maintain a large military force in Somalia to suppress clan-based violence and general banditry as the country attempts to build a working government.

The United States is gradually withdrawing its remaining 5,500 ground troops from the country in keeping with President Bill Clinton's promise.

ise of a complete pullout by March 31. The military expects a Marine amphibious force to remain off Mogadishu shores for some time after the deadline.

The recent attacks on aid agencies appear to have a mix of motives, from religious extremism to banditry to personal vendettas by disaffected Somali former employees. But they all illustrate the general instability in Somalia despite the lull in inter-clan warfare.

The U.N. Development Programme (UNDP) and U.N. High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) temporarily evacuated their Mogadishu offices a week ago after an unidentified attacker — apparently a former employee of the building's owner — threw a homemade bomb onto the roof.

A few days earlier, gunmen attacked the WFP compound in the southern city of Baidoa, killing a Somali guard and gravely wounding a Somali driver. WFP Country Director Gemmo Lodesani said the attack appeared to be an effort to steal an agency vehicle.

Mr. Lodesani had already closed the WFP office in Bardere.

On Christmas Eve, two Somalis were injured when hand grenades were thrown into the Baidoa offices of Catholic Relief Services and the Irish aid group Goal Ireland.

U.N. military officials fear the grenade attack was carried out by extremists as a protest against the celebration of Christmas in Somalia. Just before the attack, an anonymous group claiming to represent Muslim fundamentalists warned that it would kill anyone attempting to spread Christianity in Somalia.

Algerian accuses French police of power abuse

PARIS (Agencies) — A man charged with having links to armed Algerian extremists accused French police Sunday of abusing their powers and planting allegedly discriminating documents in his house.

Moussa Kraouche, 34, president of the Algerian Brotherhood in France (FAF), which has close ties to Algeria's banned militant Islamic Salvation Front (FIS), was detained in a swoop early in November.

In an interview with the Sunday paper Journal du Dimanche he said: "I accuse the police of abusing their powers, of manipulation, of having fabricated false evidence against me by slipping three pieces of paper into my briefcase that I had never seen before and which do not belong to me."

Police said Friday they found incriminated documents, including copies of a claim from another movement, the Armed Islamic Group (GIA), that it had kidnapped two French aid workers.

Investigators also said they discovered a letter given to Michele Thevenot, one of three staff in France's Algiers embassy taken hostage in October, by her captors.

Interior Minister Charles Pasqua ordered police to investigate the origin of the papers found in a raid on Mr. Kraouche's home in Taverny, just north of Paris.

A ministry statement Friday said Mr. Kraouche "admitted several times in official statements that these documents had indeed been found in his home and had given detailed accounts of how he obtained them" — a report strongly denied by Mr. Kraouche Sunday.

Mr. Kraouche's defence lawyer Jacques Verges has criticised "excesses by some sectors of the police," alleging similarities with a case of trumped-up charges against alleged Irish extremists detained near Paris in the 1980s.

Mr. Verges said Friday on French television magistrate handling the Kraouche case, he ordered a thorough reexamination of papers found in the raid to determine their origin, judicial officials said.

Mr. Kraouche was detained on Nov. 13 for associating with criminals involved in "terrorist" activities and freed on police bail on Dec. 2.

In Algiers, two militants were killed in a shootout during an attack on a police station in Algiers, a newspaper reported on Sunday.

Two passers-by were wounded in the Saturday night shootout in the hilly Beauchery district of the capital, the daily Liberte said.

It said three of the attackers had escaped.

At least 1,800 people have been killed in political violence since the Algerian authorities in January 1992 cancelled the country's first multi-party general election which the FIS won.

On Sunday three employees of Radio Algeria were wounded, one seriously, when gunmen opened fire on the vehicle in which they were travelling in the capital's district of Baraki, the official news agency APs reported.

Eight Algerian journalists were killed last year, one of them in Baraki, in armed attacks blamed on Islamic fundamentalists.



DISPLACED: A refugee family with their disabled son (left) sits under the open sky after fleeing from the Afghan capital of Kabul to escape fierce fighting between rival factions that started 10 days ago (see story on page 5).

Iraq tells its people tough times to end soon

BAGHDAD (R) — Iraq is telling its sanctions-hit citizens the worst is over nearly three years after the Gulf war and cargo ships carrying sugar and rice have already anchored at the Umm Qasr.

The arrival of the first ship in November was turned into a national occasion with fireworks and gunfire erupting spontaneously over Baghdad skies.

The government newspaper Al Jumhuriyah warned Arab states still hostile to Iraq to seek peace with Baghdad before it was too late.

"They have to realise now, before it is too late, that the embargo will officially collapse in the near future," the paper said in a front-page editorial.

Iraq is banking on recent conciliatory moves towards implementing U.N. demands on arms control and monitoring. In December it allowed U.N. helicopters to fly over Baghdad for the first time without objection.

Baghdad also agreed to

evacuate its citizens who happened to be on the Kuwaiti side of the border pending further north by a U.N. demarcation commission.

Baghdad also intends to send a high-level delegation to New York by mid-January. Deputy Prime Minister Tariq Aziz may lead the New York talks.

Iraq's aim behind such moves is to implement paragraph 22 of the major Gulf war ceasefire resolution, 687, which allows free oil exports when the Security Council is satisfied with Baghdad's performance on weapons annihilation.

Western diplomats here believe that Baghdad will continue with its conciliatory signals and refrain from openly defying the U.S. administration of President Bill Clinton.

"The U.S. wants a proven track (record) of compliance over a sustained period. I believe that is exactly what Baghdad will do," a Western diplomat said.

But Baghdad may not be ready to go the extra mile and accept all American conditions for the lifting or easing of the oil embargo.

"Recognition of the new borders of Kuwait may not be a big problem, but the thorniest issue is human rights," another diplomat said.

The U.S. is lobbying to link sanctions with the cessation of what it calls Iraqi government persecution of Kurds in the north and Shi'ites in the south.

The United States, Britain, France and Russia protested to Iraq on Wednesday over what they called widespread human rights violations, indiscriminate killings of civilians and arbitrary killings.

Baghdad says the Kurds are now under Western protection and running their own affairs away from its authority.

In the south, it said, it is fighting infiltrators, who are being armed and trained by Iran for hit and run operations on civilian targets in the area.

Sudanese-British ties have long been prickly

NAIROBI (R) — From the day General Gordon was speared in Khartoum in 1885 to the current row over ambassadors, relations between Sudan and Britain have often been prickly.

Gordon, the most renowned British general of his day, was killed by forces of religious mystic Muhammad Ahmad Abdullah, who called himself the Mahdi and besieged Khartoum while a relief army headed by General Herbert Kitchener dithered its way up the Nile.

Kitchener eventually routed the Mahdists at the battle of Omdurman and Sudan in effect became a British colony, but strains have persisted through to today's row resulting in expulsions of ambassadors from London and Khartoum.

Khartoum, feeling snubbed by Archbishop of Canterbury George Carey's decision not to visit the Sudanese capital after his tour of rebel-held areas in the mainly Christian and animist south, last Thursday

led Britain's Ambassador Peter Streats, who was on a visit to Britain at the time.

Sudan's President Omar Hassan Al Bashir said the point was to show Britain that Sudan was no longer a part of the British empire.

"We wanted it as a lesson for them... that we are independent and will not permit anyone to harm our independence," he said in an independent day speech.

On Tuesday, after warning Sudan for several days it should rescind Mr. Streats' expulsion or face the consequences, Britain expelled Sudan's ambassador to London, Ali Osman Yassin.

Although Sudan has been independent of Britain since 1956, relations between the former master and the former colony in recent years have often been strained, not just because Britain tends to be home for many Sudanese opposition groups.

In October 1988 then Prime Minister Sadeq Al Mahdi accused Kenya, Ethiopia, Israel

and unnamed foreign powers of supporting southern rebels fighting perceived Islamic domination by Khartoum. Mr. Mahdi said some European powers aimed at dividing Sudan.

In February 1988, the British Foreign Office summoned the Sudanese ambassador to explain reports that Sudan had commandeered British food and trucks for use in army operations against rebel strongholds.

On June 30, 1988, Mr. Mahdi's civilian government was toppled in a military coup led by Gen. Bashir who, with close ties to Iran, has adopted an increasingly military stance. Relations with Britain and other Western powers have deteriorated.

In January 1991, Britain said it was stopping all development aid to Sudan and urged its citizens to leave the country after Sudanese authorities freed five Palestinians convicted of killing live British citizens in May 1988.

Ten staff with the British Council cultural agency in

Khartoum were withdrawn and tighter restrictions were imposed on granting visas to Sudanese wishing to visit Britain.

The British government advised members of the British community in the Khartoum area who did not feel their presence was essential to leave the country.

The five Palestinians, widely suspected of belonging to Abu Nidal's Fatah Revolutionary Council, were freed on Jan. 7 by the Sudanese judiciary, which said they had been pardoned by their victims' families.

Seven people including two Sudanese were killed and 21 including three Americans were wounded in the gun and grenade attacks on a hotel and British club in Khartoum.

In November 1992, Britain's embassy in Sudan advised the British community to consider sending their dependants home in view of famine in the country and the tense situation in the Gulf after Iraq's invasion of Kuwait.

NEWS IN BRIEF

Iranian delegation heads for Germany

TEHRAN (AFP) — A high-level Iranian delegation left Monday for Germany amid shaky relations between the two countries, diplomats in Tehran said. The delegation, headed by National Security Council Secretary Mohammad Javad Larjani, is to discuss ways to boost cooperation with Germany, Iran's main economic partner. Mr. Larjani, who is also deputy-head of the parliament's foreign affairs sub-committee, said earlier that the delegation would seek to "improve understanding and friendship" between the two countries. Last October, an Iranian and four Lebanese went on trial in Berlin for the murder of four Kurdish opposition leaders, allegedly ordered by the Tehran authorities. The German federal prosecutor's office has openly accused the Iranian secret service of masterminding the killings. Iran has denied all involvement. Meanwhile, Iran's supreme court has upheld a death sentence against a German technician.

Kurds want sanctions exemption

ERBIL (AFP) — The prime minister of the self-declared Kurdish government in northern Iraq asked British Premier John Major to help exempt Kurdistan from a U.N. embargo against Baghdad. Kurdish sources said Sunday, Kosrat Resoul sought Mr. Major's cooperation in bringing about a partial lifting of the embargo to help "improve the material situation of our people" in a letter handed to Britain's Lord Archer who was in Kurdistan last week. Lord Archer, better known as the author Jeffrey Archer, addressed the Kurdish regional parliament on Wednesday and delivered a message from Mr. Major, recognising it. Mr. Archer said Britain would contribute through the United Nations, the European Community and directly to the humanitarian aid budget pledged by the international community to the Kurdish autonomous region. The trade embargo was imposed on Iraq after its invasion of Kuwait in August 1990. The northern Iraqi Kurdish autonomous region is affected by the sanctions, being part of the country.

Iran pardons, cut sentences for 2,300

TEHRAN (AFP) — Iranian spiritual guide Ayatollah Ali Khamenei has issued a decree granting either an amnesty or a reduction in sentence to 2,389 prisoners, the Iranian news agency IRNA reported. The agency said the decree, announced Sunday, was in response to a proposal from the head of the judicial system, Mohammad Yazdi, to mark an Islamic religious holiday in Iran.

Judeo-Christian clergy to meet

OCCUPIED JERUSALEM (AFP) — Rabbis, Catholic, Protestant and Orthodox church leaders will convene in Jerusalem on Feb. 1 for a conference on the response of religion to the modern world, the organisers announced. The International Jewish-Christian Conference on Religious Leadership in Secular Society will be chaired by Rabbi David Rosen, who played a major role in moves leading up to the Dec. 30 accord opening diplomatic relations between the Holy See and Israel. Rabbi Rosen said among those due to attend were cardinals Carlo Maria Martini of Milan, Josef Ratzinger, head of the Vatican's congregation of doctrine and faith, Archbishop of Canterbury George Carey and President of the World Council of Churches Anna Marie Aagaard. Most of the chief rabbis of Europe would participate. Rabbi Rosen said, as would Orthodox Patriarch Alexius of Russia and the ecumenical patriarch of Constantinople. Discussion topics include genetic engineering, ethnic diversity and the artificial prolonging of life.

Stop China junkets, Peres urges

TEL AVIV (AFP) — Israeli Foreign Minister Shimon Peres has urged his colleagues with a call for a halt of junkets to China. Mr. Peres sent a letter to Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin asking him to restrain the flow of ministers travelling to China, "a foreign ministry official said Monday. The rush to go to Beijing was "counter-productive," Mr. Peres charged, and asked that his ministry coordinate visits. Israel and China established diplomatic relations on Jan. 24, 1992, during a visit by former Foreign Minister David Levy. Ex-President Chaim Herzog sealed the rapprochement with a controversial trip in December the same year when he used a Jewish billionaire's private plane. Mr. Peres followed that up with a six-day sojourn last May and Mr. Rabin went to China himself for four days in October. Now four more ministers are jostling for a junket, according to the foreign ministry.

Ciller and Bhutto to go to Sarajevo

ANKARA (AFP) — The prime ministers of Turkey and Pakistan, Tansu Ciller and Benazir Bhutto, will travel together to Sarajevo next month in a gesture of solidarity with the city's besieged Muslims. Ms. Ciller was quoted Monday as saying, Ms. Ciller told reporters on the plane taking her to Brussels Sunday to attend the NATO summit that she and Ms. Bhutto would go to Sarajevo on Feb. 2. The Turkish press reported, Ms. Ciller said she discussed the visit to the Bosnian capital with Mr. Bhutto when the Pakistani leader made an official visit to Turkey last month. "I will give a press conference in Sarajevo to appeal to the international community to prevent the resurgence of Christian fundamentalism in Europe," Ms. Ciller said.

Moi Tours holy sites in Jerusalem

OCCUPIED JERUSALEM (AFP) — Kenyan President Daniel Arap Moi visited the holy places of the Old City of Jerusalem and Bethlehem on Monday after laying a wreath at a Holocaust memorial. Mr. Moi toured the traditional sites of the three monotheistic religions — the Al Aqsa Mosque, the western wall to Jews and the Christian Holy Sepulchre Church within the walled city. The 30-strong Kenyan delegation went on to the Church of the Nativity in the nearby town of Bethlehem on the occupied West Bank before lunching with Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin and signing a cultural exchange accord. The heads of the central banks of Israel and Kenya also signed a cooperation agreement under which Israel will aid Nairobi in market development and foreign currency transactions.

JORDAN TIMES DAILY GUIDE AND CALENDAR

JORDAN TELEVISION

Tel: 77411-10

PROGRAMME TWO
17:30 Le Monde Sous Marin
18:00 News in French
18:15 Le Grand Moments Du Cirque
19:30 News in Hebrew
20:00 News in Arabic
21:10 The Respected Family
21:10 Man And The Machine
22:00 News in English
23:00 Cape Rebel
23:10 Night Court

PRAYER TIMES

05:11 Fajr
06:32 Sunrise (Sunrise) Dhuhi
11:43 Dhuhi
16:50 Maghreb
18:15 Isha

CHURCHES

St. Mary of Nazareth Church Swifels, Tel: 810740
Assemblies of God Church, Tel: 637785
St. Joseph Church Tel: 624590
Church of the Annunciation Tel: 637440

De la Salle Church Tel: 61757
Terrence Church Tel: 623364
Church of the Annunciation Tel: 623541
Anglican Church Tel: 630851, Tel: 628543
Armenian Catholic Church Tel: 771331
Armenian Orthodox Church Tel: 775261
St. Ephraim Church Tel: 771751
Armenian International Church Tel: 625250
Evangelical Lutheran Church Tel: 824328
German-speaking Evangelical Congregation Tel: 64195
The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints Tel: 654957
Church of Nazareth Tel: 675691
The Evangelical Local Church Is Amman Tel: 811255

WEATHER

Bulletin supplied by the Department of Meteorology.

Clouds will appear at different altitudes with occasional showers in various parts of the Kingdom and winds will be southeasterly becoming southwesterly moderate. In Aqaba, showers are expected with clouds appearing at

different altitudes; winds will be north-easterly moderate and seas calm.

Amman Min./Max. temp. 6/13
Aqaba 11/22
Deserts 4/14
Jordan Valley 14/22

Yesterday's high temperatures: Amman 14, Aqaba 23, Humidity readings: Amman 47 per cent, Aqaba 30 per cent.

USEFUL TELEPHONE NUMBERS

NIGHT DUTY

AMMAN:
Dr. Jamal Al-Ja'fari 796440
Dr. Jum'ah Abu Dhuab 758948
Dr. Mohammad Al Ghoul 790730
Dr. Abdul Qadir Lala 760446
Firas pharmacy 661912
Ferdows pharmacy 791336
Al Asma pharmacy 637855
Naroukh pharmacy 626762
Al Salam pharmacy 636740
Yacoub pharmacy 644945
Shimshan pharmacy 637660
Nairokh pharmacy 626762
Najih pharmacy 847632

IRBID:
Dr. Ali Al Shugran 246141
Alqods pharmacy — (—)

ZARQA:
Dr. Abdul Karim Al Khashashneh 983023
Khalaf pharmacy 985417

EMERGENCIES

Food Control Centre 637111
Civil Defence Department 661111
Civil Defence Immediate Rescue 637111
Civil Defence Emergency 199
Rescue Police 192, 621111, 637777
Fire Brigade 891254
Blood Bank 751151
Highway Police 943402
Traffic Police 906590
Public Security Department 63021
Hotel Complaints 661176
Police Complaints 661176
Water and Sewerage 897467
Amman Municipality 637111
Complaints 787111
Telephone Information (directory assistance) 121
Overseas Calls 010230
Central Amman Telephone 623101
Repairs 623101
Abdali Telephone Repairs 661101
Jordan Television 771111
Radio Jordan 774111
Water Authority 681011

Jordan Electricity Authority 815615
Electric Power Company 603631
RJ Flight Information 08-53200
Queen Alia Intl. Airport 08-53200

HOSPITALS

AMMAN:
Hussein Medical Centre 81381332
Khalidi Maternity, J. Amn 64428116
Abdel Maternity, J. Amn 64264102
Jabal Amman Maternity 642362
Malhas, J. Amman 636140
Palestine, Shmezzani 66417114
Shmezzani Hospital 669131
University Hospital 845945
Al-Musallih Hospital 6672379
The Islamic Adabi 66612737
Al-Ahli, Abdali 6641606
Al-Badr, J. Amman 77710113
Al-Badr, J. Amman 77511126
Army, Malha 89161115
Queen Alia Hospital 666100
Amal Hospital 674155
ZARQA:
Zarqa Govt Hospital 09983324
Zarqa National Hospital 09980640
Ibn Sina Hospital 09986132
Al-Hama Modern Hospital 09989990
IRBID:
Princess Basma Hospital 01021555
Greek Catholic Hospital 01021225
Al-Nadha Hospital 01024700
AQABA:
Princess Haya Hospital 03314111

FOR THE TRAVELLER

QUEEN ALIA INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT

This information is supplied by Royal Jordanian (RJ) information department at the Queen Alia International Airport Tel: (08)53200-5, where it should always be verified.

ARRIVALS

Royal Jordanian (RJ) Flights (Terminal 1)

04:00 Jakarta, Kuala Lumpur (RJ)
07:30 Damascus (RJ)
07:45 Dhahran (RJ)
09:10 Muscat, Abu Dhabi (RJ)
09:25 Agaha (RJ)
10:20 Kurachi, Dubai (RJ)
10:30 Doha, Bahrain (RJ)
16:35 Frankfurt (RJ)
16:55 Vienna (OS)
16:55 Cairo (RJ)
21:00 Chicago, Amsterdam (RJ)

Other Flights (Terminal 2)

04:20 Vienna (OS)
10:45 Rome (AZ)
10:45 Paris, Beirut (AF)
19:45 Beirut (ME)

DEPARTURES

Royal Jordanian (RJ) Flights (Terminal 1)

07:00 Aqaba (RJ)
08:30 Amsterdam, New York (RJ)
11:00 Vienna, Frankfurt (RJ)
11:35 Montreal, Toronto (RJ)
11:45 Paris, Brussels (RJ)
12:05 Geneva, Madrid (RJ)
12:45 London (RJ)
12:45 Cairo (RJ)
16:35 Frankfurt (RJ)
16:55 Vienna (OS)
16:55 Cairo (RJ)
21:00 Chicago, Amsterdam (RJ)

Other Flights (Terminal 2)

13:50 Vienna (OS)
17:45 Dhahran (RJ)
21:00 Rome (AZ)
01:30 Bucharest (RO)
02:15 Amsterdam (RJ)

MARKET PRICES

Upper/lower price in fils per kg.

Apple 750/400
Banana 600
Banana (Mukammal) 620
Beans 550/400
Cabbage 70/40
Carrot 180/120
Cauliflower 70/40
Clementine 280/200
Cucumbers (large) 120/80
Cucumbers (small) 220/160
Eggplant 160/60
Garlic 170/100
Grape Fruit 90/600
Lemon 160/100
Marrow (large) 80/40
Marrow (small) 160/100
Olives (green) 700/500
Orange 350/80
Peanut (dry) 320/140
Onion (green) 220/140
Pepper (hot) 260/180
Pepper (sweet) 260/180
Potato 100/50
Radish 200/100
Spinach 120/60

Majali, Kirghiz minister discuss cooperation in education

AMMAN (Petra) — Visiting Minister of Higher Education in the Kirghiz Republic was received Monday by Prime Minister Abdul Salam Majali who discussed with him educational cooperation.

The visiting minister, T. Kakev, said after the meeting that views on educational matters were identical, noting that both sides agreed on the need to promote cooperation to provide the highest possible level of education in both countries.

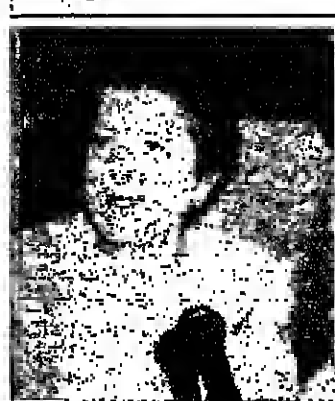
The Kirghiz Republic, home to 4.5 million people, lies in a strategic central Asian location and has links with various cultures around it, said the visiting minister.

Earlier, the Kirghiz minister was received by Minister of Planning Ziyad Fariz who discussed cooperation among Islamic states in socio-economic development.

They agreed on setting forth a study to find a proper mechanism for exchanges of educational, cultural and other expertise between the two countries.

Dr. Fariz stressed that the Jordanian government was willing to provide Kirghiz Republic with its needs of teachers at the education and higher education levels and to launch cooperation with the central Asian republic in scientific research projects related to development planning.

Mr. Kakev has been conducting talks with Jordanian ministers and touring a number of educational institutions in the Kingdom.



In'am Mufti

Mufti to take part in meetings on education

AMMAN — In'am Al Mufti, adviser to Her Majesty Queen Noor for Noor Al Hussein Foundation (NHFF) planning, development and international relations, will Wednesday participate in the meetings of the International Committee on Education for the 21st century.

Mrs. Mufti is representing the Middle East region in the four-day meetings, which are organized in Paris by the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF).

On Monday, Mrs. Mufti took part in the preliminary discussions of the report of the working group on education and science, which will end Tuesday.

Participants at the meetings will discuss working papers on education and higher education, development of basic education and international assistance in this field.



Prime Minister Abdul Salam Majali (centre) Monday attends graduation ceremony of senior civil servants. Present at the meeting are Deputy

Prime Minister Maan Abu Nowar (right) and Civil Service Commission President Abdullah Ulayan (Petra photo)

Premier encourages citizens to participate in decision-making

AMMAN (Petra) — Prime Minister Abdul Salam Majali Monday stressed the importance of safeguarding public freedoms and encouraging citizens' participation in the decision-making process.

Addressing the graduation ceremony of senior civil servants who were enrolled in a training programme organized at the Institute of Public Administration, Dr. Majali said the government was trying to make public participation in the decision-making process a reality, and added that citizens should express their views freely and should take part in discussions as well as finding solutions to existing problems.

"We are working on finding the so-called administrative chain links starting from the Cabinet, where every minister

is member of the Council of Ministers and at the same time is heading his ministry through its directors, and every director heads a group of employees," he said.

He pointed out that the government is seeking to make this chain include school students where "a teaching staff member will be as an elder brother for them, acting in the same way like the Cabinet."

Encouraging citizens to feel free to express their views, Dr. Majali said: "We are all free to talk about problems and introduce solutions to that, which we think would be successful, and we are also free to discuss any issue of concern to public interest."

He called on civil servants to refrain from personalising any issue and urged them to discuss issues in a manner that would

serve the national interests. Insitute Director Zuhair Al Kayed delivered an address at the ceremony in which he underlined the importance of providing training for administrators and civil servants.

The government, Dr. Kayed said, had worked on preparing a national training plan which is being carried out by the institute for the second consecutive year.

Some 1,700 civil servants have thus far enrolled in programmes organized by the institute and some 3,000 other are expected to enroll in similar programmes in 1994, he said. The ceremony was attended by Deputy Prime Minister Maan Abu Nowar, several Cabinet members and the president of the Civil Service Commission, Abdullah Ulayan.



Minister of Labour Khaled Ghazawi Monday addresses a meeting of representatives from 12 Arab countries on social security issues.

Present at the meeting is Mohammad Saleh Hourani, director general of the Social Security Corporation (Petra photo)

Meeting discusses Arab cooperation in social security

AMMAN (PETRA) — Delegates representing 12 Arab states Monday opened a three-day meeting to discuss ways of bolstering cooperation among Arab countries in social security fields.

The Arab Labour Organisation (ALO) is determined to join hands with the Arab countries in order to raise the level of cooperation among them in social security matters and expand and upgrade social security systems in the Arab World, announced Baker Rasoul, ALO director general, at the opening session.

In the past 25 years of its existence, the ALO has set up the pan-Arab Centre for Social Security in Khartoum to boost cooperation among Arab states and has contributed to a large extent to helping Arab states develop their systems, said Mr. Rasoul.

Khaled Ghazawi, minister of labour, delivered the opening speech at the outset of the meeting, attended by 100 participants, in which he underlined Jordan's keenness on caring for the social security of workers who, he said, shoulder the task of production and construction.

The minister welcomed development in the social security systems and upgrading of legislations which, he said, would ensure expanding of services and better protection to the workers.

Mr. Ghazawi said that the delegates, who represent governments, workers and employers, are bound to benefit from their consultations and the exchange of views and introduce modernisation to the Arab social security systems later on.

Giving due care to social security matters, he added, is one of the main components of developing socio-economic fields in the Arab World.

In the three-day meetings, the delegates are scheduled to discuss working papers covering concepts of social security in Islam, developing and modernising the existing Arab systems and cooperation among Arab states in addition to an ALO general report on achievements and future plans.

Delegates attending the meeting are all directors of social security organisations and representatives of labour ministries of the Arab World, coming from Bahrain, Syria, Oman, Egypt, Iraq, Yemen, Tunisia, Sudan, Libya, Palestine, Mauritania and Jordan.

By Rama Hussein
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — Police and family members are looking for a 22-year-old Ma'an man missing since Thursday, Jan. 6, in what appeared to be the first reported case of its kind in several years, according to Sa'ad Kreishan, a family member.

Hussein, the third son of Mohammad Kreishan, a merchant who lives in Ma'an, was dropped off by his father at a service taxi station. He had on him 50,000 Saudi riyals (JD 9,000) to exchange in Amman, Mr. Kreishan told the Jordan Times.

"We are not sure what happened to him, because his father dropped him at the station and left before checking if his son took a car to Amman or not," Mr. Kreishan said.

He added that it is a mysterious case that involves, most likely, the Ma'anis because ev-

Majali pledges government's support for Jerusalem commission

AMMAN (Petra) — Prime Minister Abdul Salam Al Majali Monday pledged that the government would provide all facilities and the essential climate for the newly-appointed Royal Commission for Jerusalem Affairs to enable its members to conduct the required research work and undertake their various responsibilities.

In a letter to His Majesty King Hussein, in reply to Sunday's message he received from the Monarch, the prime minister said that the commission will be assisted in all possible manners in order to help it

carry out its task of consolidating the facts about Jerusalem and highlighting the role of the Hashemites in safeguarding the Holy City and upholding Arab and Islamic rights in the holy places.

The message was in reply to the King's letter in which he renamed the commission members who will be serving under the chairmanship of His Royal Highness Crown Prince Hassan.

King Hussein said that the government ought to facilitate the work of the commission and sufficient funds should be made available to ensure the

success of its mission.

The new commission, King Hussein told Dr. Majali, would exert constant efforts, deep scientific studies designed to highlight the status of Jerusalem "to clarify our relationship with the city and to embark on a comprehensive, informational, cultural and guiding role through the help of scholars and historians in the Arab and Islamic World."

In his reply message, the prime minister said that the choice of Prince Hassan at the helm of the commission was the strongest indicator of the importance attached to the

commission's mission.

"In all situations, Prince Hassan has shouldered the prime responsibilities and rose to any occasion, and your choice of the commission members was very wise indeed as they all have proven to be worthy of trust," said the prime minister.

"Your decision to form the new commission, which is entrusted with a serious mission, came on the day of Al Israa Wal Mi'raj and at a time when the Holy City is facing constant danger aimed at obliterating its Arab and Islamic identity," said Dr. Majali.

Japanese official's visit to the region prompted by 'rapid developments in peace process'

By a Jordan Times Staff Reporter

AMMAN — Japanese Deputy Foreign Minister Hiroshi Fukuda arrived here Sunday on a four-day visit as part of a Middle East tour aimed at exchanging views with the region's leaders on the peace process.

Mr. Fukuda, who travelled overland to Jordan from Israel through the West Bank across the King Hussein Bridge, is scheduled to be received by Prime Minister Abdul Salam Majali on Monday.

A diplomatic source said Mr. Fukuda's visit was prompted by "rapid developments in the Middle East peace process."

Describing the visit as very important, the source said: "Japan is closely following up all events in the peace process and likes to have a regular exchange of views of all parties involved in the peace negotiations."

Mr. Fukuda, who leaves Jordan on Jan. 13, already met with Israeli officials in occupied Jerusalem, where

he began his visit. He will also visit Syria and Egypt.

The Japanese minister, who is paying his first visit to the Middle East after assuming office, is closely involved in his country's role in the multilateral phase of the peace process.

Japan chairs the multilateral working group on the environment and is an active member of the working group on water.

Mr. Fukuda's visit to the region follows a recent meeting in Tokyo of the steering committee of the multilateral groups.

The Japanese minister will also be discussing Jordanian-Japanese relations and follow up on the recent visit to Japan by Prime Minister Majali.

During the visit, Japanese leaders, including Prime Minister Morihiro Hosokawa, voiced appreciation of Jordan's active participation in the peace process and reaffirmed their government's commitment to helping the Kingdom address its economic concerns.

Also expected to be reviewed during Mr. Fukuda's visit is an \$80 million Japanese loan to help develop Jordan's energy sector.

The loan, which will match a similar loan from the World Bank that Jordan has already received, could be merged into a \$150 million soft-credit for Jordan under consideration by the Tokyo government. The credit will finance the expansion of the Aqaba Thermal Power Plant.

Japan, which holds around \$900 million of Jordan's foreign debts of \$6.88 billion, has promised to help Jordan alleviate its external debt burden through rescheduling arrangements.

In principle, Japan opposes debt write-off and advocates "help for those who help themselves." Japanese officials have expressed appreciation of the measures adopted by Jordan and say that such policies are behind the continued Japanese interest in extending aid to the Kingdom.

Jordan is expected to receive between \$30 million and \$40 million in Japanese

aid during 1994, officials said shortly after Dr. Majali's visit to Japan last month.

Japan, which grew from the ashes of its economy after the war to become one of the top international aid donors, insists that aid recipients depend on themselves to develop their economies and repay foreign debts in the long term rather than seeking debt relief in the form of write-off.

The bulk of Jordan's dues to Japan (up to \$800 million) is in the form of soft loans with one per cent annual interest and repayable in 30 years. The loans were mostly extended shortly after the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait in August 1990 and aimed at helping Jordan absorb its economic losses from the crisis sparked by the invasion.

Jordan does not qualify for outright Japanese grants since Tokyo continues to follow an international convention which allows assistance to be given to countries with less than \$800 per capita income. Jordan's per capita income was \$1,020 in 1992.

Test-tube babies boom in Jordan as Europe frets

By Rana Sabbagh Reuter

AMMAN — In a region where infertility can make you an outcast, Dr. Zeid Al Kilani is helping childless couples to procreate and boosting Jordan's expanding medical services industry.

Dr. Kilani, the Arab World's pioneer of test-tube babies, is in great demand at his shining new Amman hospital at a time of anguished debate in Europe about the ethics of making children in a laboratory.

"God please let me become a mother," pleaded Basma Subhi, 34, who came to Dr. Kilani's Farah Hospital from Yemen for treatment.

Her husband Ahmed, a soldier who borrowed money from his family to take his wife to Jordan, stood by her recalling their desperate search for a doctor who could help.

She had just left the operating room where doctors started the 48-hour process by removing an egg from her ovary. The egg will be injected with her husband's sperm. If fertilised it will be implanted in her womb to begin a normal pregnancy.

The couple were among dozens streaming to Jordan for treatment at the private hospital. In the Arab World, childless couples often feel social outcasts. Many men with infertile wives take extra spouses.

German-educated Kilani, 54, has helped create more

than 300 test-tube babies since starting his in vitro fertilisation (IVF).

Artificial fertilisation of barren and post-menopausal women has triggered an ethical and legal debate in Europe. Controversy erupted after a 59-year-old British woman gave birth to test-tube twins and a black woman was reported to have received a white embryo.

Questions are also being asked about creating children from the sperm and ovarian tissue of dead fathers and mothers — even using aborted foetuses to produce the genetic offspring of someone who was never born.

France wants the European Union to harmonise rules on test-tube babies to avoid "medical tourism" by wealthy, infertile women. It wants to restrict artificial fertilisation to infertile, living couples of child-bearing age.

Dr. Kilani hopes low charges and a proven track record will attract couples from Europe and the United States on a package combining medical treatment and tourism.

Last year, he opened a multi-million-dollar four-storey hospital in central Amman, staffed by a team of 28 doctors, laboratory technicians and nurses.

It now treats male infertility by micro-insemination — injecting a single sperm into the outer shell of an egg under a

special microscope.

Attitudes in the region to test-tube babies have changed dramatically in the past eight years, Dr. Kilani said. But his battle to launch new techniques was not easy.

He first turned to Jordan's grand mufti, the senior Muslim authority. He ruled in 1985 that IVF for a married couple was acceptable as long as only the couple's sperm and egg were used.

Dr. Kilani set up a small, specially-equipped clinic. He persevered in spite of an attempt by a religiously-motivated group to burn down his centre.

After several failures, Jordan's first test-tube baby was born in April 1987.

Inside Dr. Kilani's clinic, women from all walks of life, some in traditional Muslim headscarves, sit in a waiting room discussing their struggle to have a baby.

The treatment has not only helped parents, but has been a boost for Jordan's efforts to become a regional medical centre. Success in treating male infertility, Dr. Kilani said, came only months after similar results in Europe.

"You are not only giving hope and happiness to thousands of hopeless and miserable people, but medically speaking, for Jordan this is a top achievement as there is hardly a gap between us and the West," Dr. Kilani said.

Jordan's first micro-inse-

nation baby was born in October, only five months after the world's first was born in Britain.

"We opened our doors to male factor treatment last December and we got the first pregnancy in February, a healthy boy, followed by twins," Dr. Kilani said. "We are very, very happy with our results."

According to figures released by the eighth world congress on IVF in Japan, 25 of 452 women who conceived through micro-insemination worldwide by September were at Dr. Kilani's centre.

According to Dr. Kilani, the hospital's micro-insemination and IVF programmes have a 20 per cent and a 22 per cent success rate, which he says are comparable to those in the West.

Couples pay about \$1,500 for his micro-insemination programme, compared to costs that he said could reach up to \$45,000 abroad.

Dr. Kilani hopes normalisation of Arab-Israeli ties under Middle East peace talks will bring clients from Israel, although the Jewish state hopes to attract Arabs to its own impressive test-tube baby programme.

"I am sure we will have an influx to our centre," he said. "If they feel safe, they will come here because we have very good results and are very reasonably priced."

WHAT'S GOING ON

EXHIBITIONS

- ★ Photo exhibition by artist Mawaffaq Al Sheikh at the Royal Cultural Centre.
- ★ Art exhibition by artist Sadik Kwaish entitled "Talisman" at Baladna Art Gallery.
- ★ Exhibition on the 100th anniversary of the death of French novelist Guy De Maupassant at the French Cultural Centre.
- ★ Exhibition of Iraqi books at the Royal Cultural Centre.
- ★ Exhibition "Prints and Drawings of Fakhrulnissa Zeid" (1915-1991) until the 15th of January '94 at Darat al Funun of the Abdul Hameed Shoman Foundation. Also showing the "Permanent" Exhibition. (Tel. 643251/2).

DRAMA

- ★ Drama for children entitled "The Question" at the Royal Cultural Centre at 11:00 a.m. and 5:00 p.m.

FILMS

- ★ Bulgarian film entitled "Everything is Love" at Abdul Hameed Shoman Foundation at 06:30 p.m.

LECTURES AND SEMINARS

- ★ Seminar in Arabic entitled "Investment in Palestine and Fears of People in the Occupied Homeland" with the participation of Dr. Nabil Kokali and Mr. Ahmad Abdeen at Abdul Hameed Shoman Foundation at 6:00 p.m.
- ★ Lecture in English entitled: "Aspects of Bilateral Relations Between German Companies And Their Partners in the Near East" by Friederike Adlung at Goethe-Institut at 7:00 p.m.
- ★ Seminar attended by writers and journalists interested in women's issues in Jordan at the Phoenix Gallery for Art and Culture at 6:00 p.m.

Ma'an man missing with JD 9,000

everybody was used to seeing father and son carrying large sums of money regularly from Ma'an to Amman.

"He was supposed to be back sometime Thursday evening, but he did not show up or try to contact his family," Mr. Kreishan added.

The family became suspicious of their son's disappearance and notified all police stations and hospitals in Ma'an, in an effort to locate him.

According to Mr. Kreishan, the father and police questioned all service taxi drivers and money changers that Hussein could have passed by, but all denied seeing him the day of his disappearance.

"The whole community in Ma'an is angry and shocked by the mysterious disappearance of Hussein and all are working together and have conducted a wide campaign in areas nearby

to try to find Hussein," Mr. Kreishan explained.

Four years ago, Mr. Kreishan added, the Ma'an community experienced a similar tragedy when a sheep merchant was also reported missing with a large amount of money on him. His body was discovered a month after his disappearance.

Until Monday evening, no news of the missing man was reported. Mr. Kreishan said that Hussein's family are placing an advertisement, with a JD 5,000 reward, in local newspapers for any person who gives any information that will help lead to their son.

3 people die in separate accidents

A three-year-old Balqa child was killed Sunday when he was run over by a car driven by a 45-year-old man, according to civil defence reports.

Ahmad Hani was playing in the street in the Darar area when he was hit by the car.

When civil defence officers arrived to the scene of the accident, the child was already dead. They took him to Mouadi Sili Hospital. A traffic official said it was the driver's fault.

Meanwhile, in Al Quesmeh area, a 70-year-old woman was shot accidentally, Sunday, by his 24-year-old friend while playing with his gun, according to police and civil defence reports.

Mariam A.A. died later in hospital of third degree burns.

In Al Shouneh Al Shemalish area, the drowned body of a 65-year-old man was pulled by civil defence officials from King Abdullah Canal Sunday, according to civil defence reports.

"When civil defence officers arrived to the canal, the man was already dead," a civil de-

fence official told the Jordan Times. The official maintained that civil defence officers are still investigating the accident to determine what caused the man to drown.

Youth shoots friend by accident

A 20-year-old youth was shot accidentally, Sunday, by his 24-year-old friend while playing with his gun, according to police and civil defence reports.

Ahmed Khaled, was carried to Al Bashir Hospital for gun wounds to the face and neck. He was listed in bad condition, according to hospital reports.

Police reports indicate that the youngsters were playing when a bullet was fired accidentally striking the boy in his face. Police have seized the weapon and are investigating the case.

Jordan Times

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Jordan Times advertising department.

Messenger with bad news?

YESTERDAY, IN a meeting with members of the so-called "Monday circle" (which is a group of journalists and diplomats who every Monday host a prominent personality for in-depth briefing), the prime minister, blamed the media for perpetuating the strain in Jordan's relations with Saudi Arabia and Kuwait. During the one-hour encounter, Dr. Majali also blasted the media for its handling of the debate over the much-opposed amendment to the Election Law and for creating what he termed tension between government and Parliament in the days leading to the confidence session in early December. Only three weeks ago, the conflict-ridden Jordanian People's Democratic Party issued a statement in which it blamed four periodicals of conspiring to tarnish the image of the newly-formed group. And at about the same time, when infighting within the Islamic Action Front surfaced strongly and led to mass resignations in its central committee, the Front secretary general told journalists at a press conference that the press was totally responsible for "inflating" the problem.

Journalists are of course used to politicians blaming them for their own problems. This is being repeated on daily basis in most if not all, including the most democratic societies. Journalists, it should be recognised, should bear little or no responsibility for improving ties among states, nor for contributing to their deterioration. They are after information that they feel should be disseminated to the public. The public, it must be remembered, has the right to know what their governments are doing.

In the case of the one-person, one-vote amendment to the Election Law, it is unfair to say that the media portrayed it as directed against the Islamists. The Islamists themselves and most of other political activists were saying this all the time. The media only printed what was being said by politicians and political analysts. That too was exactly the case with reports on rifts within the People's Democratic Party or the Islamic Action Front.

As for writers, who bear the responsibility in a free and democratic society for their views, it must be understood that more often than not the opinions reflect the sentiments of the people. If our neighbours cannot or do not want to accept that our democracy is dependent on a free press then that is their problem. Or are they in fact worried altogether by democracy itself and are pressuring us into a reversal?

While we think that the answer to this question is in the affirmative, we want to remind critics that the press only echoes the sentiment of a people, who in this case at least still feels bitter for the punishment meted out on Jordanian nationals in Kuwait immediately following the Gulf war and whose reverberations continue to this very day.

ARABIC PRESS COMMENTARIES

A COLUMNIST in Al Ra'i Arabic daily criticised the newly concluded Jordanian-Palestinian pact as bringing nothing new for the two sides. The negotiations on both sides have let down their peoples by signing deal that does not provide for practical steps to fuse the two peoples' unity or at least pave the ground for genuine cooperation and coordination, said Fahed Al Fanek. The pact, signed on Jan. 7, is more rhetoric than a real achievement and served as an appeasement for the Jordanian and Palestinian people, but it did not provide anything concrete, said Fanek. The only new thing stemming from the deal in the opening of Jordanian banks' branches in the West Bank, said the writer. But, he added, this is totally in the hands of the Israeli authorities which can say yes or no. The point about the continued use of the Jordanian currency is not new because the Palestinians have been using this currency all along since the 1967 occupation of their land, he pointed out. The writer said that there is nothing in the pact that states that Jordan and Palestine will become a united market and the only reference to this point was a clause calling on the two sides to encourage free trade exchanges, but this clause is of course not binding to anyone. The term "encourage" could at any moment be deleted since it means nothing for the two sides and so is the case with the terms consultations, coordination, etc. added the writer. If anything, he said, the pact reaffirms the fact that the two sides had never been in agreement about any of these points before and the negotiators who drafted it offered only lip-service to the public.

A COLUMNIST in Al Dastour said democracy, justice and respect of laws are not often honoured by the state's establishments. It so often happens that certain personalities suddenly acquire public administration positions not because they have applied and waited for the post for so long after graduation but rather because they are relatives or friends of the responsible person who has created particular positions to fit them, said Taher Al Udwan. The former Parliament had debated this question, prompting the then-government to set up what came to be known as the "inspection department" at the Prime Ministry to control such excesses, but it seems that many persons are getting away with it and succeeding in getting senior positions which often are secured under a "contract" category, said the writer. It happens that often the appointee is a retired civil servant or one who has resigned public office to run for elections, but failed, added Udwan. This is clearly unfair to the army employees who have been waiting years and working diligently to acquire senior posts and improve their status, and unfair and unjust to the queues of college graduates who have been waiting for many years to get a job, stressed the writer. Nepotism and favouritism are widespread in Jordan nowadays, said the writer who asked whether the country has any laws to control such practices. He said that as long as this injustice continues, the future of democracy will be grim.

The View from Fourth Circle

Provincialism and humanism in the Jordan-PLO accord

By Rami G. Khouri

The Jordanian-Palestinian agreement that was signed a few days ago has been called a comprehensive framework for bilateral economic relations, as it has been called a vague or even a hollow accord that has little practical meaning. The very different perceptions of the agreement strike me as extremely revealing of the broader political context which defines the actions of most actors in the contemporary Middle East.

Our region is in the midst of a historic reconfiguration that sees small and large entities alike scrambling to define their roles, to secure their rights and to assure their well-being — during a moment of profound regional transformation that could be threatening or promising, depending on how things develop in the years to come. Jordan and Palestine, along with other small entities such as Lebanon and Kuwait, are each exploring the most appropriate means of self-assertion and self-preservation.

For thousands of years, the cultural character and economic-political power flows of this region have traditionally been defined by developments in several key centres, notably Damascus, Cairo, Baghdad and Istanbul, with Tebran, Beirut and the Gulf oil producers playing a role in recent decades. A quick glance throughout the region shows that all of these traditional centres of civilisation and/or economic power are experiencing various degrees of distress.

I think there are three basic, related reasons for this situation. The first is that the post-World War I fragmentation of the traditional national configurations in our region has reached a decisive moment; the many countries formed during this century are having to work harder to assert their credibility and viability and to assure the well-being of their people. The concept of many small, independent Arab states divided from one another by legal frontiers and bureaucratic barriers is a historical anomaly. This runs counter to the dominant historical patterns of the last several thousand years, when people, goods, money and ideas moved freely throughout the Middle East within loose regional systems of governance that were held together by the power that emanated from centres such as the capitals mentioned above.

The second reason is that parallel with this fragmentation and compartmentalisation of national entities, all the individual countries of our region are experiencing severe stress on their resource bases. Populations continue to expand at a very brisk rate, but fragmented economies and pressures on water and land resources cannot provide sufficiently for the needs of the people of this region. Consequently, and perhaps naturally, individual countries are scrambling to assure their well-being on a unilateral or bilateral basis, working within an increasingly narrow scope of vision.

The third reason is that the regional/global order that we have lived with during the past half a century is disappearing. The two defining geo-political forces that maintained the regional order in the Middle East since mid-century — the East-West cold war and the Arab-Israeli conflict — have either vanished or are in the process of vanishing. With the sudden breakdown of the binding geo-political forces that maintained the old Middle Eastern order, many small and large countries in this region are scrambling to define new forces of survival and development.

The Jordanian-Palestinian accord, viewed within this broader historical, geographical and political framework, appears to be an inevitable and logical development. The arguments for and against the accord, and the contentious, hurried manner in which it was formulated, are a sign of the times. Viewed within the narrow parameters of relations between the people of Jordan and Palestine, the accord is merely one of many such attempts since the early decades of this century to define formal political and economic relationships between relatively small, homogenous groups of Arabs in Jordan and Palestine.

But viewed in the broader regional context outlined above, the accord is part and parcel of a much larger trend in our region that sees all regional actors working to redefine relationships in the wake of the breakdown of old ones.

Historically, small entities (whether formal states, sub-regional tribal confederations or ethnic/religious groups) defined their status and assured their well-being according to their relationships with the historical power centres in Damascus, Cairo, Baghdad and Istanbul. The 20th century also saw local actors positioning themselves close to new power and fiscal centres, whether regional ones such as Tebran and Riyadh, or international neo-imperial commercial and military powers such as London, Washington and Moscow.

The crises that define the major regional centres, however, and the general disinterest in the region by the foreign powers whose access to Middle Eastern oil is secure, have brought about the current situation. Cairo, Baghdad, Damascus, Tebran, Istanbul and Riyadh are busy with their own domestic problems; they and the global powers that provided national anchorage for the people of the Middle East have suspended or abdicated their traditional responsibilities. The people of this region, taken on a regional level, are patriarchy without patriarchy.

The two new indigenous forces that emerged from the grassroots of this region during this century — Arab nationalism and politicised Islam — could have played an important stabilising role. But both of them have yet to mature and to take root as new anchors of national identity and regional

socio-economic development. The third force that could play this role — an indigenous brand of democratic pluralism in which civil society structures forge stable personal political identity and national allegiance — is in the process of being born in some countries, among which is Jordan.

Until this process matures and spreads throughout the region, however, we will continue to scramble and to seek national survival on the basis of narrow self-interest. This is the inevitable consequence of our region's status as a collection of vulnerable and largely dependent states living in a post-imperial, post-decolonisation, post-cold war, and post-Arab-Israeli conflict world whose ancient poles of power and culture have all relinquished their historical roles. Our world has changed radically in the last few years, but most of us in this region have not changed in line.

The Jordanian-Palestinian accord is a very localised dimension of this regional imperative for change. It is driven by Jordanian and Palestinian needs, but it is also driven by a certain fear that has been evident since the signing of the PLO-Israel accord in September — the fear that we may be vulnerable to economic domination by Israel in a post-war Middle East.

I believe this fear is unjustified, because Israel is not exactly a shining example of a strong, creative, expansive economy. Rather, it is an economic basket case that is deeply dependent on American grants, contributions from Jews around the world, War World II reparations and other sources of funds that are the antithesis to free market dynamism. Israel certainly has technological power, but we in the Arab World will be able to match Israel's expertise it and when we transcend our modern legacy of political and intellectual autocracy and free the ample creative talent of our people.

There is a certain Arab hysteria about Israel's future economic and political dominance of our region, and I believe that this also relates directly to the lost anchorage of our people. The Jordan-PLO accord is a small, local, but constructive sign that some fragments of the Arab World are trying to reconstruct new national configurations that can serve the long-term interests of the Arab people.

The rebirth of the Arabs will require similar developments on a regional level, especially in the great traditional centres of culture, politics and economy in Damascus, Cairo and Baghdad. To argue the fine print of the Jordan-PLO accord is to miss the larger picture of our economy and our national identity, to be blinded by the harsh glare of provincialism rather than to honour the bountiful legacy of our Arab-Islamic humanism.

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Global culture: The paradox of U.S. dominance

By David Rieff

NEW YORK — "A civilisation progress from agriculture to paradox," the Romanian aphorist E. M. Cioran once wrote. It is not a conviction that sits particularly well with Americans, who tend to shy away from contradictions and, instead, continue to believe that solutions exist for every problem.

And yet a dual paradox informs the American situation following the cold war. The first part concerns how a country by tradition and disposition more self-absorbed than most became the animating spirit of the global culture that more and more predominates from Guangdong to Berlin. The second offers the spectacle of a nation whose official ideology is increasingly the "celebration" of diversity, while it remains culturally, although not racially, astonishingly homogeneous not to say conformist, in its attitudes.

"All you Americans talk and talk about is diversity," a French intellectual exclaimed in exasperation at the end of an American Studies conference held in Paris last year, "so what I want to know is how it is that you all sound the same?"

A caustic observer might have responded by taking the Frenchman's question a step further and insisting that the genius of the multiculturalist movement was its ability to appear radical while not in fact threatening the status quo — in much the way that the trend in industrial production towards mass customisation gives consumers the impression of being able to get a product designed expressly for them; in fact, technological advances permit an almost infinite segmentation of the consumer base.

In a sense, this process of segmentation, whether expressed in the fracturing of "high culture" or the proliferation of television channels, or in the multiplication of affinity groups in which people define themselves in terms of being subject to some behavioural pathology, is less the feature of a traditional nation-state than of a world. If one thinks of the United States as having become a universe at least as

much as it remains a country, divisions within it make more sense.

All empires, even of the peculiar American kind, eventually become "world nations," in Walt Whitman's celebrated phrase. If only because this experience of selling to such a monolithically consumerist but segmented public has been the defining experience of American capitalism for so long, it should come as no surprise that the global consumer culture — particularly in the realm of movies, music and food — has remained almost as American monopoly in a time when U.S. hegemony in other industries has been shattered.

No wonder so many Americans remain so confident that their parochial concerns and self-definitions are shared by everyone. With some real exceptions (for example, the Indian film industry within India) it is Hollywood, the American music industry and American food chains that predominate.

The Europeans, the French in particular, are terrified by this. French politicians, cultural impresarios and performers tend to talk about what is produced in New York and Los Angeles in rather the same tones as environmentalists talk about the Brazilian farmers who are burning the Amazon — as an unstoppable force that will destroy all in its path unless confronted by force.

To them, the situation is clear. If Europe does not resist this American cultural invasion, as a French official remarked to the weekly L'Espresso, "there will soon develop a standardised world culture created according to American norms."

There are those who dismiss such fears, believing them to be overstated or insisting that America's preeminence in mass culture will inevitably give the way of its dominance in other industries. According to the latter model, cultural power moves with financial and industrial power. When Holland was at its apogee, Dutch styles in home furnishings were imitated all over the world. But, this argument runs, when Holland declined, the world turned to other models.

To some degree, the recent

rise of Germany and Japan confirms that such processes still occur. Few countries that become powerful do not succeed (Germany is the obvious exception here) in imposing their national cuisines on the rest of the bourgeois world or influencing high fashion.

But successfully imposing a taste for sushi or Jil Sander linen jackets is not the same thing as engendering a global mass culture as the United States has done in the 20th century. It is all the more surprising, then, that the American domination of mass culture has only intensified in a period when American power in other domains has waned. And yet the fact remains that now, American mass culture is everywhere triumphant.

In many instances, the financing for, say, a Hollywood studio will come from overseas, and it is commonplace that the people producing this "American" culture are often imported, like National Hockey League players, from overseas. But such diverse facts as bungee jumping and cigarette smoking, although they did not originate in the United States, seem to gain worldwide acceptance through their commodification — another way of describing their Americanisation.

Jules Verne was interested in dinosaurs, but no French movie company could possibly have produced "Jurassic Park." In this, as in any number of other instances, cultural nationalists like the French political class are right to be fearful.

The class character of the objection is worth noting. What is probably most distinctive about American popular culture is its resolutely popular character. As not only the prestige but the economic significance of high culture wanes (and opera, symphony orchestras and museums increasingly can survive only through state subsidy or private philanthropy), it becomes more and more irrelevant to our common cultural future. And in an era of high culture's eclipse, the market can reassert itself.

All things being equal, Wal-Mart is a better investment

than Gucci, just as Bruce Springsteen is more valuable as a cultural commodity (both in the literal sense of return on investment and in terms of the numbers of people throughout the world who are affected by him) than even such desperate popularisers as Luciano Pavarotti.

There are exceptions, of course. Very poor countries have succeeded in preserving their culture authenticity. It can even be argued that the constant flows of immigrants from South to North, and in the European case, perhaps increasingly from East to West, will function as cultural "reinforcements" from home, both linguistically and in terms of mores, and will serve as an undertow to the general tidal pull toward homogenisation.

But all of this only underscores something that most people understand instinctively: that the history of consumerism, like the history of sentiments, proceeds unevenly in different classes and in different parts of the world. The general direction in the world is towards greater similarity. This process of homogenisation is as yet incomplete.

Autonomy deadline in doubt

(Continued from page 1)

estimations are too optimistic and the negotiations should last longer because a lot of problems remain," Mr. Gluska said. "But we will do our best to wrap it all up as soon as possible."

The two delegations held a brief plenary session at the Hilton Hotel and then Dr. Shaath and Gen. Shahak met alone.

After lunch, which saw Gen. Shahak and Dr. Shaath chatting by the pool, the plenary session resumed. Both sides said they would meet again Tuesday at the level of sub-committees.

"I'm an optimist by nature and there is only room here for optimistic men," Gen. Shahak told reporters at the end of the day.

"I am hopeful this will lead us to conclude an agreement as soon as possible," said Dr. Shaath. "It was a day full of activity. We explored all areas in order to draft a final agreement."

The talks had been suspended since Dec. 29 when the PLO denied an Israeli claim that a deal had been done in Cairo on the main bone of contention.

Israeli and Palestinian secretaries took notes on Monday to try to avoid future misunderstandings.

After a week of vitriolic exchanges the two sides announced last Thursday a re-

turn to negotiations on the basis of the declaration of principles and the "Cairo understandings."

The negotiations have stumbled over the control of border crossing from the autonomous areas of the Gaza Strip and Jericho, the size of Jericho and security issues.

On the eve of the talks, clashes in the Gaza Strip refugee camp of Bureij between supporters and opponents of autonomy left two Palestinians dead and five wounded, Palestinian reports said.

Military officers told the cabinet Sunday that support for the accord in the occupied territories was plummeting. Missing the Dec. 13 deadline killed the euphoria in the occupied lands that had followed the accord.

After weeks of talks between teams led by Gen. Shaath and Dr. Shaath failed to reach agreement on the terms of implementation, higher-level delegations moved their discussions from Oslo to Paris to Cairo.

But the last Cairo round two weeks ago added an element of

confusion and mistrust to the differences because the sides disagreed about whether an understanding had been reached.

Mr. Peres said a formula for joint Israeli and Palestinian control of border crossings, and an area of 55 square kilometres for Jericho, had been agreed to by his Palestinian counterpart.

But PLO chief Yasser Arafat mixed the plan and PLO officials insisted it had never been an agreement, only an Israeli proposal.

The Dava daily newspaper quoted an unidentified senior negotiator saying the talks have returned to the starting point, and would require extended negotiations and further intervention by top officials. Despite the delays, many Israeli right-wing leaders maintain that the crisis with the PLO was largely a fiction calculated to draw attention away from impending Israeli "concessions".

Dan Margalit, a pro-Rabin commentator in the liberal Haaretz daily, wrote that "Rabin's sourness with Arafat... has contributed to public support for the government."

Damascus meeting backs accord

(Continued from page 1)

aid to Egypt and Syria promised in the declaration, pledging only to examine the question of funding three development projects in Syria and three in Egypt.

"We will concentrate on economic and political cooperation, but as for security cooperation it would be dealt with bilaterally between one country and another," Mr. Sharaa said Sunday.

Revolts awaken public to plight of Latin poor

By David Haskel
Reuter

WASHINGTON — Revolts in Mexico and Argentina are making people wonder how long Latin American governments can go on pressing severe austerity policies without effective measures to alleviate the plight of the poor.

"I think Santiago del Estero and Chiapas are warning light," said Isaac Cohen, who heads the Washington office of the U.N. Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC).

He was referring to incidents

in Mexico's state of Chiapas and Argentina's province of Santiago del Estero, some of the poorest areas in each of the two countries.

More than 100 people were killed in Chiapas — some estimates are as high as 400 — after peasants rebelled on new year's day demanding access to jobs, housing and schooling. Two weeks earlier, riots erupted in Santiago del Estero after the government announced it was unable to pay civil servants back wages.

The incidents are particularly noteworthy because they took place in two of the richest

and most successful exponents of the free market drive sweeping across Latin America.

"We all welcome free market policies, but for stability to be sustained, you also need a frontal attack on poverty," Mr. Cohen said.

His words echoed those of the Inter-American Development Bank (IADB) which, like ECLAC, has been clamouring for years for more social policies aimed at fighting poverty. "Growth alone will not solve the problem of poverty it must be confronted directly if growth is to be sustained over time," the Washington-based

IADB warned last October in its latest annual report.

Following the disastrous experience of the 1980's in which strong government intervention brought about high inflation, capital flight, huge indebtedness and economic chaos, in the 1990's the pendulum swung all the way to the other side.

State intervention was out private enterprise was in. Privatisation became the buzzword. And in country after country governments decided to let market forces try to bring prosperity in areas where they

had failed.

The strategy slashed inflation, stabilised the economies, attracted foreign investors and spurred dramatic growth.

However, Latin America's 200 million poor, who have been neglected for years and whose plight worsened during the 1980's, saw no alleviation to their woes.

To the contrary, severe austerity drives led governments to slash social expenditures and at the same time lay off workers as they sold off or closed down state-owned firms.

Otto Reich, a former assistant administrator of the U.S. Agency for International Development and an ex-ambassador to Venezuela, said privatisations are welcome, but governments are abruptly retreating from the economic arena — creating a dangerous vacuum.

"In the short run you cannot just throw people out of jobs and say 'Go find a new job' when there aren't any. Some temporary measures are absolutely necessary," he said.

However, not everybody agrees on the urgent need to take emergency steps.

Palestinian dissidents overcome differences

AMMAN (AP) — Hardline Palestinian factions have overcome organisational differences that had threatened the survival of a newly formed alliance dedicated to wrecking the Israel-Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO) autonomy deal, officials said.

They said reconciliation was achieved after the Islamic Resistance Movement, Hamas, retracted demands for the lion's share in a leadership council of the alliance of Palestinian forces, formed Dec. 16.

Tayyar Khalid, an alliance member, said Hamas accepted two seats in the leadership council, equivalent to the number of seats allocated for each of the other nine hardline groups espousing ideologies ranging from Marxism to Islamic fundamentalism.

Mr. Khalid said the agreement was reached during a meeting in Damascus on Thursday.

Mr. Khalid belongs to the Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine (DFLP), the third largest faction within the PLO after Chairman Yasser Arafat's mainstream Fateh faction.

The DFLP is opposed to Mr. Arafat's negotiating strategy with Israel in the 26-month-old U.S.-backed Middle East peace process.

It is particularly opposed to the Israel-PLO agreement reached Sept. 13 and envisages limited autonomy to the nearly two million Arab residents of the occupied West Bank and Gaza Strip.

Like other Marxist groups in the Damascus-based alliance, the DFLP argues that the agreement falls short of fulfilling Palestinian aspirations for an independent state.

Hamas and other Islamic groups in the alliance are vehemently opposed to any dealing

with Israel and advocate its total destruction.

The hardliners formed a rejectionist front in September 1992 to challenge the PLO's moderate strategy but it has not been able to seriously undermine Palestinian participation in the peace process.

Since the Israel-PLO accord was signed in September, the 10 groups have been seeking to consolidate the alliance. But their efforts were hampered by calls from Hamas for half of the seats in the leadership council, to reflect the group's clout in the occupied territories.

Hamas has also insisted on forming a new command to replace the leadership of Mr. Arafat, but the DFLP and other factions strongly opposed the suggestion.

Mohammad Nazzari, Hamas representative to Jordan, confirmed that his group backed down on earlier demands, but refused to elaborate.

He only said that the alliance will meet again in Damascus on Jan. 19 to name the members of the leadership council and discuss other organisational matters, including the "escalation of the Palestinian military operations against the Zionist enemy."

In addition to Hamas and the DFLP, other factions in the alliance include Islamic Jihad-Palestine and Hizbollah-Palestine as well as the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine, the second largest group in the PLO.

Also members of the alliance are the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine-General Command and Fatah-Uprising, a dissident faction of Mr. Arafat's mainstream group, as well as splinter groups of the pro-Iraq Palestine Liberation Front, the Community Party and the Popular Struggle Front.

Suspect denies role in Berlin bombing

BEIRUT (AP) — A Palestinian suspected of masterminding the 1986 bombing of a West Berlin discotheque denied Monday any involvement in the attack that triggered U.S. air strikes on Libya.

Yasser Chreidi, 34, claimed innocence during a two-hour interrogation conducted by Chief Prosecutor Mouneef Oweidat, his press office said.

Mr. Chreidi was arrested July 6, 1993, in connection with the killing of a fellow Palestinian, Jamal Kayed, in South Lebanon.

In August, German authorities notified Beirut that they had evidence implicating him in the 1986 murder of a Libyan dissident, Mustafa Ashek, in Berlin. They requested his extradition.

Lebanon declined, citing the absence of an extradition treaty between the two countries. But he was promptly put on trial for the alleged murder of Ashek after his file was forwarded from Germany.

Mr. Chreidi has denied he killed Ashek. The criminal court in Sidon is expected to issue a verdict in the Ashek murder case Feb. 22.

In November, Lebanon received a second request for his extradition for alleged involvement in the bombing of La Belle disco in Berlin.

Evidence implicating him in that attack had been obtained from East German secret police files.

Mr. Chreidi was brought Monday to Beirut from his jail cell in the South Lebanon port city of Tyre in a heavily-guarded motorcade.

Mr. Oweidat's press office said after the session that Mr. Chreidi insisted he had nothing to do with the disco bombing or Ashek's murder. He claimed that at the time of these attacks, he was working as a driver at the Libyan embassy in East Berlin.

The Berlin prosecutor's office, however, has said Mr. Chreidi was accredited as a diplomat at the Libyan mission in East Berlin.

Two off-duty U.S. soldiers and a Turkish woman were killed and 229 other people wounded in April 5, 1986, bombing of the disco.

Citing evidence of Libyan involvement in the La Belle bombing, then U.S. President Ronald Reagan ordered retaliatory air strikes on the Libyan capital, Tripoli, and the city of Benghazi.

Mr. Chreidi was a butcher in the 'Ain al Hilweh Palestinian refugee camp near Sidon, provincial capital of South Lebanon, before leaving for East Germany in 1978.

He returned in 1989 after the collapse of the Berlin Wall. Police say they have evidence that Mr. Chreidi was enlisted by Abu Nidal group shortly after his return to south Lebanon.

Kabul under air attack; historic mosque gutted

KABUL (Agencies) — Warplanes from rival forces continued bombing raids on Kabul Monday as artillery fire gutted the city's historic blue mosque and casualties in 10 days of fighting soared to more than 400 dead and 4,500 injured.

The Poul-e-Kheshti mosque in the centre of Kabul was set ablaze during fierce artillery duels, which began overnight and went on until early hours Monday.

Shells struck the ancient mosque, whose blue minarets have long dominated the skyline. It was not known whether any people were inside, but the building is usually occupied by worshippers.

The main Friday congregations were held at the mosque, a religious and cultural treasure and main attraction for visitors, with Afghan and foreign dignitaries often joining the prayers.

Another historical site, the Kabul museum, was earlier destroyed in the factional fighting last year.

Sources said a coal storage in the Pule Mahmood area, near the blue mosque, also caught fire from a rocket, destroying 35,000 bags of coal Monday.

Jets from the air forces of rivals Uzbek warlord Abdul Rashid Dostum and President Burhanuddin Rabbani pounded each other's troops. One bomb landed inside the huge presidential palace and plumes of black smoke were rising from a section, witnesses said.

General Dostum, in collaboration with the troops of the Hezb-e-Islami chief, Prime Minister Gulbuddin Hekmatyar, launched an offensive 10

days ago to oust Mr. Rabbani, whose defence is led by Shooraa-Nazari forces commanded by former Defence Minister Ahmad Sbah Masoud.

Gen. Dostum's militia and Mr. Hekmatyar's hardline Hezb-e-Islami forces tried to push north across the Kabul River in an assault on the Soviet-built Microrayon housing complex that was captured from Gen. Dostum by Rabbani forces.

Much of the heavy shelling and rocketing had died down by Monday morning as both sides paused to re-equip for the next round, officials said.

But sporadic small arms and heavy machinegun fire rained across the war-shattered city in hand-to-hand fighting along the frontline just south of the city centre.

Occasional bursts of heavy shelling and rocket fire erupted throughout the morning.

Wounded people took advantage of the pauses to make their way to the city's already overcrowded hospitals, which have treated more than 4,000 wounded. Hundreds of people are feared to have been killed but no exact death toll was available.

One rocket ploughed into the radio room of the International Committee of the Red Cross, one of the few remaining international aid organisations that has not pulled out of the devastated city.

Thousands of Kabul residents were fleeing along the main road east to Pakistan, many too poor to go further were sleeping in the open in the town of Jalalabad.

Shells hit Sarajevo as NATO ponders strikes

SARAJEVO (R) — Shells crashed into the centre of Sarajevo Monday while Western leaders pondered whether to launch air strikes to break the Serb stranglehold on the city.

Journalists based in the battered Holiday Inn reported deafening explosions as shells pounded downtown streets and buildings. In the past week 46 people have been killed.

The Bosnian capital, under siege since last April, sits in a valley, making it an easy target for Serb gunners on surrounding mountains.

After 21 months of war, pressure is growing for the West to take a tougher line on the siege of Sarajevo and to curb attacks on United Nations troops throughout the republic.

U.S. President Bill Clinton and French President Francois Mitterrand discussed possible air strikes on Serb forces in Bosnia at a North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) summit on Monday, a French spokesman said.

Presidential spokesman Jean Musitell said Mr. Mitterrand

told fellow leaders that NATO must back its statements on former Yugoslavia with rapid action, noting that existing resolutions allowed for air strikes to protect peacekeepers.

Mr. Musitell quoted Mr. Clinton as responding that the United States was prepared to accept a statement endorsing air strikes to break the stranglehold on Sarajevo provided all the allies accepted responsibility for the consequences.

The other two warring sides, Muslims and Croats, continued to struggle for territory in central Bosnia as peace talks by their representatives in Bonn went into a second day.

At least six people died and more than 30 were wounded in fighting near Vitez on Sunday that began with an early morning Muslim offensive on the Croat enclave they have surrounded.

One person died and one was wounded on Monday as a fighting continued at a lower intensity. U.N. military spokesman Colonel Bill Aikman said there appeared to be no major changes on the front line.

In Bonn, peace talks between Bosnia's Muslim president, Alija Izetbegovic, and Croatian President Franjo Tudjman opened with a new map being circulated giving the Muslims just over a third of Bosnian territory.

The meeting was intended to approve a ceasefire to the fighting in central Bosnia between Zagreb-backed Bosnian Croat militia and the Bosnian government army.

Diplomats in Geneva where full-scale peace negotiations are due to resume on Jan. 18 said the map met the target, set by European Union ministers, of awarding a third of the republic's territory to Muslims under an eventual peace plan.

Talks on ending Bosnia's 21-month-old civil war have often been accompanied by an increase in fighting as warring sides try to gain greater leverage at the negotiating table.

In central Bosnia, about 65,000 Croats have been trapped in the Lasva Valley since June, losing ground slowly but steadily to the more numerous and better organised Bosnian army.

Major Mike James, a British U.N. officer in the area, said the Bosnian army attacked Croat forces at four points in the Vitez pocket, with the thrust pointed at the village of Santic on the road east of Vitez.

He said the offensive appeared to be aimed at cutting off the Croat supply route between Vitez and Busovaca, which the Croats have admitted they cannot afford to lose.

The fighting forced U.N. peacekeepers to close a major supply route into the area, where about 1.5 million civilians are dependent on aid.

International mediator Lord Owen said before the Bonn talks that a ceasefire in central Bosnia would be easier to conclude if progress could be made on political issues.

A Bosnian-Croat agreement is also seen as crucial to the Geneva talks.

But, before managing to leave Sarajevo on a flight delayed by shelling, Mr. Izetbegovic said he was pessimistic about the outcome of the Bonn talks.

Mortar barrage kills five in Turkey

ANKARA (R) — An overnight mortar barrage killed five women and children in the mainly Kurdish town of Cizre in southeastern Turkey, officials and residents said on Monday.

They said several people were wounded in the bombardment.

Unal Erkan, emergency rule governor of 10 southeastern provinces hit by a Kurdish revolt, flew to Cizre, located on the Tigris river near the Syrian and Iraqi borders, to investigate.

Security sources said two people had been shot dead in separate killings in the southeastern city of Batman.

A senior official in Sirnak province said five people were killed when mortar bombs hit a house in Cizre's Cudi district, a stronghold of support for the Kurdish Labour Party (PKK).

He said it was not clear whether Turkish troops or separatist PKK guerrillas had launched the mortar barrage.

Cizre residents said they heard mortar blasts, interspersed with shouting and wailing, for about 90 minutes in the early hours of Monday and said there was no apparent return fire.

"We were woken up in the middle of the night by a big explosion," one resident said. "We could hear shouts and cries until the blasts stopped at about three o'clock."

Residents said three pregnant women and two children died when bombs struck their two-storey dwelling. The owner of the house and his son, who was on leave from the army, were seriously wounded. The son was taken to hospital in Diyarbakir.

Heavy security was in force in the impoverished town of Cizre on Monday, with military helicopters flying over the town and armoured vehicles patrolling the tense streets.

Last week a baby and its parents were killed, four civilians were wounded and three houses badly damaged in a similar mortar barrage against

the same residential district of Cudi.

Residents blamed troops for the bombing. Officials said security forces had been responding to firing from Cudi.

There has been frequent friction, sometimes leading to gunfire, between Cudi and a nearby compound inhabited by the families of village guards paid by the state to fight the PKK.

Residents said last week the guards had forced up to 350 of the 1,000 families living in Cudi to leave their homes.

An unnamed official quoted by Milliyet newspaper on Monday said people were leaving Cizre because of PKK intimidation.

It quoted Cizre Mayor Hasim Hasimi as urging the government to act to revive the economy of the town, whose lifeline, trade with Iraq was wrecked by U.N. sanctions. "The people of Cizre are still hoping for peace and security," he said.

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Mother of nine killed in latest Algerian violence

ALGIERS (R) — Suspected Muslim fundamentalist gunmen killed an Algerian mother of nine on Sunday near a shop in the capital Algiers, police said.

In their latest report on political killings in the country, police listed 10 other victims, including four other women, one of them her throat slit as she tried to defend her blind husband from attackers.

A police statement reported by the official news agency APS named the woman killed on Sunday as Aicha Bouche-lahem, 47. She died in hospital after she was hit in the head by attackers armed with automatic pistols and hunting rifles.

In another incident on Sunday three employees of Radio Algeria were wounded, one

seriously, when gunmen opened fire on the vehicle in which they were travelling in the capital's district of Baraki, APS reported.

Eight Algerian journalists were killed last year, one of them in Baraki, in armed attacks blamed on Islamic fundamentalists.

On Saturday three unidentified gunmen killed the mayor-designate of El Ancer, 280 kilometres east of Algiers, police said. A municipal employee was murdered in a similar attack in the Tiaret area southwest of the capital.

The burned head of an unidentified person was found the same day close to the city hospital in Biida south of Algiers.

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Applicants must respond by January 18, 1994.

Arab Gulf funds to play key role in Palestinian development

ABU DHABI (AFP) — Arab Gulf funds expect to play a key role in reviving the battered economy of the Israeli-occupied territories when they come under Palestinian rule in a limited autonomy agreement.

The development funds in the six-nation Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) are in touch with the World Bank to chalk out a mechanism for cooperation in pumping investment into the territories under a \$2 billion world aid package.

A Gulf official said Sunday.

"Gulf and other Arab funds will play a pioneering role in financing development projects in Palestine (occupied territories)," said Badr Mashallah, coordinator of the official Arab development funds.

"They have been entrusted by their government with supervising the aid to be provided by Gulf states. They will also oversee the implementation of the projects in coordination with the World Bank," he told AFP in an interview.

Saudi Arabia has pledged around \$100 million for the world package for Palestinians while Kuwait and the United Arab Emirates (UAE) have promised \$25 million each. Most of the remaining funds in the package will come from the United States, Japan and other industrial nations.

"The funds pledged by Gulf states are not final. It is just the first stage," Mr. Mashallah, a Kuwaiti, said.

Mr. Mashallah is in the UAE for annual talks of operations chiefs in Arab and other regional development funds. The talks opened Monday and will cover financing of new projects in Arab countries and other developing nations as well as cooperation with other funds, he said.

The meeting is attended by the Arab Fund for Economic and Social Development (AFESD), the Arab Monetary Fund, the Arab Bank for Development in Africa, OPEC

Fund, the Islamic Development Fund and national funds in GCC states — Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, Oman, Kuwait, Qatar, and the UAE.

AFESD will present a report to the meeting on its financial operations in the occupied West Bank and Gaza Strip, Mr. Mashallah said.

"AFESD has a long experience in financing development in Palestine. It will explain its experience so other funds will benefit in mapping out a joint policy for future operations there," he said.

The Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO), which signed with Israel the Sept. 13 autonomy accord for Gaza and the West Bank town of Jericho, has said it needs around \$11 billion until the year 2000 for reviving the economy, wrecked by 26 years of occupation.

The organisation has been suffering from its worst financial crisis due to a halt in aid by its main Gulf donors following

its support for Iraq's invasion of Kuwait. GCC states have extended the bulk of the nearly \$2.5 billion the PLO has received in Arab aid since 1979.

Figures provided by Mr. Mashallah showed total funds provided by the participants in Monday's talks stood at \$35.7 billion, of which around \$14.5 billion were given by Gulf funds. Total aid by GCC and other Arab governments has exceeded \$100 billion, he added.

"The funds are playing their role well in development in the Arab region. But economic difficulties have persisted in some Arab states because of mismanagement of funds, technical and manpower problems, political instability and other factors," he said.

He said Gulf funds did not change their financial policies after the war but there has been a "geographical change in the distribution of money."

Mr. Mashallah, however, said financing plans for 1994 covered all Arab states.

UAE real estate sector booms

ABU DHABI (AFP) — An economic upswing caused by higher government spending and a sharp decline in bank loan interest rates boosted investment in the real estate sector in the United Arab Emirates (UAE) to record levels in 1993, dealers said Sunday.

Operations in the property sector, the biggest investment field in the UAE, were worth billions of dirhams (dollars) in 1993 while soaring demand pushed up rents by between 10 and 30 per cent.

"The year 1993 saw a boom in activities related to construction and land trading," said Zuhair Kaswani, director of Al Shahrani Real Estate Centre.

"Turnover is estimated at several billions of dirhams and it is the biggest since the UAE federation was established (in 1971)."

Dealers said the upturn was caused by soaring return from real estate investment, a steep

decline in loan interest rates and a business upswing due to high government expenditure, which stood at 17.6 billion dirhams (\$4.79 billion), the highest in nearly a decade.

Bank loan interests have plunged to between five and six per cent from more than 13 per cent three years ago while investment return in the real estate sector has exceeded eight per cent. This is much higher than interest rates on deposits of around three per cent and stocks of five to six per cent.

"Another factor is a rush by investor from other Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) states into the real estate sector after a GCC summit decision to allow them to buy property in the UAE," one dealer said.

Dealers said high liquidity and the absence of other major investment opportunities also contributed to the construction upswing in the UAE.

Liquidity rose to around 85 billion dirhams (\$23.1 billion) at the end of 1993 from 73 billion dirhams (\$19.8 billion) at the end of 1990.

A report by the Arab Cement Union said the UAE planned to invest more than \$1.5 billion in new construction and infrastructure projects.

It said this would enable the country's cement plants to make high profits after some of them suffered from losses due to a large decline in cement prices caused by excess supply and a fall in domestic demand.

"The 1993 construction boom has given birth to an active speculative market for dealing in land and commercial buildings," Mr. Kaswani told AFP.

"Many investors made large profits due to a sharp increase in prices."

He said a sharp increase in demand for houses had prompted the UAE emirates Abu Dhabi, Dubai and Sharjah to

opt for high-rise towers given their relatively small area. Such towers were replacing small buildings, whose life has exceeded 20 years, with the aim of making higher profits, he added.

Dealers said the opening of branches by several foreign companies and banks, a large increase in transit passengers and the upgrading of the communication network had also contributed to prosperity in the housing sector.

Mr. Kaswani said the high demand had pushed up land prices by 20 to 80 per cent while hotels recorded the busiest year in more than a decade.

"In the next year, land prices are expected to grow further as demand for land and houses will continue to increase and trade and industrial activity gains momentum," he said.

Swedish government focuses on halving unemployment by 1999

STOCKHOLM (AFP) — The Swedish government plans to cut unemployment in half by 1999 and reduce the deficit and borrowing requirement significantly, Finance Minister Anne Wibble said Monday as she presented the 1994-1995 budget proposal to parliament.

"If Sweden is to have good, new jobs, and a reliable welfare system, growth must be high and stable, inflation must remain low, and the structural reorganisation plan (approved by parliament last spring) must be seen through," she underlined.

In presenting the budget, which had been leaked widely, Ms. Wibble painted a brighter picture of the Swedish economy than in years past, announcing that growth, exports, industrial production and investments are all expected to rise quickly.

"During 1994 growth will be close to 2.5 per cent and nearly three per cent the following year. Thereafter, growth must be around four per cent per year for 1996-1999 if we are to reach the goals of cutting unemployment in half and of having a reliable welfare system," Ms. Wibble said.

In so doing, the number of new jobs could increase by 2.5 to three per cent per year, she predicted.

Sweden's current unemployment level is the highest since the 1930s. The number of jobless workers amounts to 8.4 per cent of the workforce, while another 6.4 per cent are occupied on retraining and other government schemes to

combat unemployment.

According to Ms. Wibble's proposal, overall unemployment is expected to remain high in 1994, but will decline slightly in 1995. By 1999, the government hopes to have cut current unemployment figures in half.

In addition, gross domestic product (GDP), which has decreased for three consecutive years, is expected to climb some two per cent in 1994 and three per cent in 1995, due mainly to a strong increase in exports after the devaluation of the Swedish krona in November 1992.

Exports are expected to increase by close to 11 per cent in 1994 and some seven per cent in 1995. The strong rise in exports is also expected to bring an increase in industrial investments in 1994 and 1995.

The consumer price index, which rose some four per cent last year due to more expensive imports after the devaluation, is expected to increase this year by some 2.5 per cent and by three per cent in 1995.

The budget deficit will decrease significantly in 1994-1995, according to Ms. Wibble's new finance plan.

The deficit is expected to amount to 216 billion kronor (\$26 billion) for the current budget year 1993-1994, while the borrowing requirement will amount to just over 271 billion kronor (\$32.5 billion).

For the budget year 1994-1995, the deficit is expected to decrease to 172 billion kronor (\$20.7 billion) and the borrowing requirement to 220 billion

kronor (\$26.5 billion).

"For growth to be stable, the threat of a galloping national debt must be eliminated," Ms. Wibble told parliament.

She pointed out the public sector's deficit of close to 200 billion kronor (\$24 billion), or 13.5 per cent of the GDP. Sweden's is the fastest growing OECD debt, when measured in relation to GDP.

"The structural reorganisation plan of 81 billion kronor (\$9.75 billion) that parliament adopted last spring must be realised as planned," Ms. Wibble emphasised.

Swedes will feel the consequences of the new budget most when visiting the apothecary and the dentist. State spending on dental insurance and prescription medicines will decrease by 1.2 billion kronor (\$144.5 billion) in 1995, Ms. Wibble announced.

Other savings target adult education, home-language instruction, the building of war shelters, and housing construction and renovations.

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THE BETTER HALF

By Glasbergen

Mutt'n'Jeff

Russian recession not yet over

MOSCOW (R) — Economic ills triggered by Russia's move to a market economy are not over yet and gross domestic product (GDP) is expected to contract by further five per cent this year, Interfax News Agency said Monday.

The agency, quoting economics ministry officials, added that industrial production would fall by six per cent, while earnings would fall by between three and five per cent in real terms.

The gap between rich and poor would widen and unemployment would reach six to seven million people.

Government figures show that 728,000 people were registered unemployed in October, but officials say the real number of jobless is much, much higher.

The agency said preliminary estimates showed that Russian gross domestic product, a broad measurement of goods and services, contracted by 12 per cent in 1993. GDP fell 18.5 per cent in 1992.

Interfax quoted the State Statistics Committee as saying that Russia's gross domestic product fell 11 per cent to 132 trillion roubles (\$103 billion) in the first 11 months of last year, compared to the same 1992

period.

Production of consumer goods fell 12 per cent in the first 11 months of last year compared to previous year levels.

Consumer price have risen nine-fold last year in comparison with an increase of 26 times in 1992, Russian Finance Minister Boris Fyodorov wrote in an article published in the daily Izvestia.

"Inflation still remains catastrophically high, and it's ridiculous to claim that we have carried out too tough a policy or a shock therapy (kind of reform)," Mr. Fyodorov said.

Economic performance could have been better, Mr. Fyodorov said if the government had not been forced to how to pressure from the old parliament for more state subsidies.

Mr. Fyodorov also claimed wages were growing faster than prices and real incomes rose by 10 per cent in 1993.

Critics of the government say the success of Vladimir Zhirinovskiy's ultranationalist party in the parliament election last month was the result of growing public frustration over painful price of the market reforms.

Mr. Fyodorov said the De-

cember inflation rate of 12 per cent was a record low since the beginning of market reforms in January 1992. He also said the rouble had strengthened against the dollar, falling just 10 per cent since June.

Among other goals for 1994, Mr. Fyodorov said he hoped the government could bring down inflation to five per cent a month and achieve a rouble rate of about 2,000-2,500 roubles to a dollar by the end of 1994.

However, he said there were fears communists and ultranationalists, two of the largest blocs in the new Russian parliament, could force Yeltsin to outlead pro-reform ministers and backtrack on reforms.

Mr. Fyodorov warned that slowing the pace of reforms would mean "disaster, continuation of the time of strife and betrayal of Russia's national interests."

He said demands by the communists and ultranationalists for more social spending will only result in a price jump of 20 times and a sharp drop in the rouble.

Meanwhile, Foreign Trade Minister Oleg Davydov said Russia has the capacity to double its arms exports in 1994.

Russia exported \$1.2 billion worth of weapons in 1993.

"For political reasons we have stopped supplies of weapons to countries at war — Afghanistan, Angola, Ethiopia and some others," Mr. Davydov told TASS in an interview.

But Russia never received anything for exports like that. Now the whole system of arms exports has been changed and we export weapons for hard currency only," he pointed out.

Mr. Davydov said a new company, Rosvooruzheniye, was being set up to coordinate the operations of Russian arms exporters and investment in defence industries.

The foreign trade ministry would remain responsible for licensing and controlling arms exports, he added.

Foreign investment in India soars

NEW DELHI (AFP) — Foreign investors have pledged \$4.3 billion to industrial projects in India since it opened up its huge market in August 1991, ending four decades of protectionism, the government said Monday.

Some \$2.9 billion of that was committed in 1993, when overseas investment pledges more than doubled from the previous year, the industry ministry said in a year-end report released here.

"More than 90 per cent of the total investment have gone to high-technology and technological industries," the ministry said.

Those included power and telecommunications involving transfers of high technology, which get a priority approval over manufacturers of consumer items ranging from Coca Cola to Ray Ban sunglasses which have appeared here.

But the industry ministry acknowledged that actual investment flows since August 1991, when Prime Minister P.V. Narasimha Rao's government threw open the doors to foreign companies, had been a modest \$880 million.

Of that, \$539 million dollars came in during 1993.

But officials said there was no reason for discouragement because priority projects such as telecommunications involve a long gestation period between the point of government approval and fund flows.

U.S. companies were the top investors, followed by the British, Swiss and Japanese.

India's market was closed to foreigners in the name of self-reliance for 44 years since it won independence from British rule in 1947.

Profit repatriation was eased and a majority shareholding allowed for foreign companies.

Turkey expects 7.5m tourists in '94

ANKARA (R) — Turkey, hit by Kurdish guerrilla attacks on tourist target last year, expects 7.5 million visitors in 1994, its tourism minister has said.

"At a rough estimate, we will receive 7.5 million tourists and earn a minimum of \$4.5 billion, or about 12 per cent up on last year," Abdul Kadir Ates told Reuters in an interview.

He predicted that the proportion of tourists from rich industrialised countries would continue rising as in 1993.

Low-spending visitors from eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union accounted for 34 per cent of arrivals last year, compared to nearly 50 per cent the year before.

Mr. Ates said advance bookings from Europe were looking quite healthy and he was trying to attract more tourists from North America, the Pacific region and the Middle East.

Tourist earnings from 7.2 million visitors topped \$4 billion in 1993, when midsummer kidnappings and bomb attacks by Kurdish rebels scared off holidaymakers in droves and inflated revenues losses of between \$500 million and \$1 billion, Mr. Ates said.

He said the attacks had depressed demand considerably after June, but earnings had picked up from mid-September.

The Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK) kidnapped at least 19 foreigners in eastern and southeastern provinces where it has been fighting a guerrilla war for independence since

1984.

It also set off small bombs in Istanbul and the western seaside towns of Antalya and Kusadasi, killing one Turk and causing dozens of mostly minor injuries to Turks and foreigners.

PKK spokesmen in Europe have again warned tourists not to visit Turkey, saying tourism earnings help fund what they call Ankara's "dirty war" against Kurds in the southeast.

Mr. Ates said PKK violence was preventing economic development in the southeast, whose ancient sites, spectacular mountains and wild rivers he believed could lure up to 3.5 million tourists and inject \$1.5 billion a year into the local economy.

The ministry has prepared plans for tourist development all over the southeast, including ski resorts in Bingol and Hakkari province, where guerrillas and drug smugglers now prow.

"This is the saddest part of the picture," he said. "Tourism has a great potential in that region when the killing stops."

Mr. Ates said delegations from Egypt, Israel and Turkey would meet in Cairo next week to complete the bylaws for the East Mediterranean Tourist Association they set up in November.

"This agreement sets an example of regional cooperation. It can help change the image of the Middle East, contribute to lasting peace and, in time, bring economic benefits," he said.

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JUMBLE

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(Answers tomorrow)

Yesterday's Jumbles: CRANK, POKED, EMBARK, MARMOT

Answer: What the cop did to the cook — "BOOKED" HIM

THE Daily Crossword by Kenneth Wirtz

ACROSS

1. Store in a secret place
2. Latvian city
3. Bridge
4. Actress Shire
5. Aroma
6. Shredded
7. Harp-like bands
8. Dress
9. First-class
10. Go on a spree
11. American humorist
12. Oklahoma town
13. Sticky stew
14. Staff symbol
15. "Saturday Night Fever" music
16. "go go" pan
17. Mosier
18. Consequence
19. Very pale
20. Mount Salm
21. "yourself"
22. "volume"
23. Indo-European
24. Horned vipers
25. Screams of fright
26. Corn of Iran
27. Corn unit
28. Chatter on and on
29. Lotion additive
30. "the hatchet" (make peace)
31. Gogonic
32. Quarter leader
33. Take the "off"
34. Cancel
35. Emotions
36. Pig, a g
37. Expensive

DOWN

1. Gase
2. Scarlett's home
3. "want for"
4. Earth pigment
5. Impetuous
6. "Hasbena"
7. Inacine
8. Vandike kin
9. Light bulb gas
10. Miles
11. Impoverished
12. "Rule Britannia" composer
13. Exigency
14. Belsely
15. Most expansive
16. Nebraska city
17. Also-ran
18. Humble
19. Smelling need
20. Contemptible
21. Curs
22. "Blue — Shores"
23. Golf club
24. Kiampers and
25. Preminger
26. Tropical flower
27. Increases the
28. Dm
29. Antennae
30. Canality
31. Bribes
32. Instructa
33. Straying
34. French priests
35. Cartographer's
36. Schematic signal
37. National term
38. Solitary
39. Exhort
40. Watchdog
41. Sea eagle
42. Child and fever
43. Brown seaweed

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S. Africa police raid hostel after journalist killed

JOHANNESBURG (Agencies) — Police raided a migrant workers' hostel in Johannesburg's township Sunday following the killing of a journalist by gunmen who attacked an ANC peace mission near it Sunday.

Police spokesman Deon Peens said police arrested a man, seized an R5 rifle, ammunition, 31 petrol bombs, a home-made handgun, marijuana and a bundle of forged South African bank notes.

The search of Mazibuko Hostel began at 4:30 a.m. (0230 GMT) and lasted just over three hours, he said.

Witnesses said gunmen at the hostel killed photographer Abdul Shariff, 31, and wounded two other journalists in the attack on the party, which included ANC General Secretary Cyril Ramaphosa and Communist Party leader Joe Slovo.

Police Brigadier Zirk Gous said evidence indicated the attack was launched from the hostel.

The officials were visiting Katlehong to try to drum up support for a campaign to quell fighting between so-called self-defence units.

ANC leader Nelson Mandela, speaking on national television Sunday night, said the situation in Katlehong, one of South Africa's most violent townships, could not be allowed to continue.

"We cannot allow a situation where a hostel has now become a centre of the most blatant criminal act," he said.

Mr. Mandela said he would meet President F.W. de Klerk on Tuesday to put forward proposals on ending the violence.

Police have specific proposals to make," Mr. Mandela said, without giving details. "If he (de Klerk) does not act on that, South Africa is facing a crisis."

Police said Sunday night they had shot dead a gunman and captured three more, although they were not sure that they were the men who attacked the ANC party.

The ANC Monday reacted angrily to reported comments by Martinus van Schalkwyk, spokesman for the ruling National Party, that the organisation had provoked its opponents by visiting Katlehong.

"The ANC leadership went there on a peace mission to acquaint themselves with the horrific circumstances under which residents live and to show our solidarity with them," ANC spokesman Carl Niehaus told reporters.

"Only a party that does not care for the lives of black people can issue such statements," Mr. Niehaus said.

Political violence in Katlehong and neighbouring Tokoza claimed at least half of the 3,000 lives lost last year in South Africa in feuding between rival groups.

Police say most of the fighting in the areas is caused by turf wars between supporters of the ANC and those of the Zulu-based Inkatha Freedom Party, many of whom live in the workers' hostels.

The ANC's Ronnie Mamoepa said the volatile situation in Katlehong was being referred to the multi-party Transitional Executive Council, which meets in Pretoria Tuesday.

Mr. de Klerk Monday expressed shock at the death of the journalist in the black township Sunday and said the country's standing probe into violence would investigate the incident.

In a statement issued by his office, Mr. de Klerk said he had been informed that Judge Richard Goldstone, who heads a standing commission of inquiry into violence which bears his name, would investigate the attack.

Mr. de Klerk said he "strongly supports such an investigation, especially in the light of contradictory interpretations of the role of the South African police."

The African National Congress blamed the police for the incident, saying it failed to provide proper protection for the much-publicised tour by the ANC secretary-general and the South African Communist Party chief.

But Brigadier Gous shrugged off the protests, citing the rapid reaction of the security forces and saying the ANC had never asked the police for protection.

Mr. de Klerk said he would discuss the attack with Mr. Mandela at a meeting in Pretoria Tuesday.

In the wake of the killings, Mr. Mandela told South African television Sunday he had proposed measures to end the violence in a phone call to Mr. de Klerk.

Between May and December, 1,200 people were killed in townships east of Johannesburg, accounting for more than a quarter of the national death toll of 4,000 last year.

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An Australian firefighter smiles under the falling rain as light showers gave some 10,000 firefighters the first sign of relief in their battle against fierce fires threatening the population of Sydney suburbs (AFP photo)

Rain helps hard-pressed Australian firefighters

SYDNEY (AFP) — Light rain fell here Monday giving firefighters at least a brief respite in their battle against bush fires which have left four dead and a trail of destruction in New South Wales, fire authorities said.

The rain and cooler conditions helped the firefighters contain most of the 136 fires still burning throughout the state and provided the chance to backburn defensive fire breaks.

But Bush Fire Services Commissioner Phil Koperberg forecast worse conditions later this week and warned that the trouble was far from over.

"We are not going to experience severe conditions today and tomorrow but on Wednesday and Thursday the weather bureau expects horrific conditions," Mr. Koperberg said.

"Everything is under control but the fires are not out. The difference could depend on a quick change of temperature and wind."

Two major fires were still blazing in the Blue Mountains west of Sydney and on the central coast, north of here, but several other blazes were tamed overnight, at least for the time being.

The toll of homes confirmed destroyed or damaged remained at Sunday's total of 298.

Arsonists have been blamed for starting many of the fires still raging in the state.

For the last two days, fire authorities have been using specially equipped naval Sea Hawk helicopters among their fleet of 47 aircraft fighting the fires.

The anti-submarine Sea Hawks, usually operated from RAN guided missile frigates, were fitted with huge water-buckets attached to the winch.

A navy spokesman said following successful trials Sunday more similarly-equipped Sea Hawks and Sea King helicopters would join the fight.

Firemen in the Blue Mountains

paused briefly to attend the funeral of their colleague volunteer firefighter Norm Anthes, 45, who was killed when a tree fell on him after a fire at Mount Horrible near Bathurst west of here Wednesday.

Meanwhile, government offices, businesses, public utilities and insurance companies announced a variety of measures to help people whose homes had been damaged or destroyed.

Prime Minister Paul Keating announced that disaster relief payments to families left homeless by the bushfires would be more than trebled from \$600 to \$2,000.

Australian media tycoon Kerry Packer and his companies will contribute \$3 million to a fund to help victims. The Channel 9 television network announced.

Police announced Monday that three young men had been arrested after being spotted by an off-duty constable lighting a fire in a bushy median strip on a road in Sydney's outer west Saturday.

A police spokesman said the three, two aged 18 and one 19, were expected to be charged with breaching the New South Wales Bush Fire Act.

At least 11 people, including four youths camping on the state's north coast, have already been issued with court appearance notices for allegedly lighting fires during a prohibited period.

Two others have been charged with arson-related offences in relation to other fires, neither of which were major bushfires.

Meanwhile, the New Zealand government Monday said it would donate \$500,000 to an appeal for the victims of Australia's bushfires.

Foreign Minister Don McKinnon said the government would give the money to an appeal set up by the New Zealand branches of the International Lions Club.

Yeltsin announces government reshuffle

MOSCOW (AFP) — Russian President Boris Yeltsin announced Monday that he was streamlining the government, axing two of the six posts of deputy prime minister, without specifying whose jobs would go in the reshuffle.

The presidential decree, issued on the eve of the opening of the new parliament, called on Prime Minister Viktor Chernomyrdin to propose candidates to the different posts within a week.

The number of deputy prime ministers would be cut from six to four and the number of first deputy premiers from three to two.

Following the Dec. 12 general elections — seen as a setback for the pro-reform Russia's Choice party — Mr. Yeltsin said a major revamping of the government was necessary, as the government "had not worked hard enough."

Meanwhile, a military tribunal trying 12 former Soviet hardliners responsible for the August 1991 coup against then President Mikhail Gorbachev, Monday called for an official medical check-up on two of the accused who have repeatedly held up the trial because of alleged health problems.

Monday's scheduled court session was adjourned after five minutes on the grounds that former Prime Minister Valentin Pavlov and former parliamentary speaker Anatoly Lukyanov were not well enough to attend.

The court demanded official medical confirmation of their ailments before the hearing resumes Wednesday.

Mr. Pavlov, who suffers from high blood pressure, is in hospital after undergoing surgery, according to Court President Anatoly Ukolov.

Mr. Lukyanov is ill at home, according to his lawyer, but he had been seen attending political meetings this past week, ahead of the opening of parliament which he is a member.

The trial opened on April 14, but has failed to make much progress.

Russia's first post-Soviet parliament, a mishmash of right-wing extremists, old-guard Communists and fractious reformers, holds its inaugural session Tuesday, launching what is widely expected to be a new centre of resistance to President Boris Yeltsin.

But contrary to the old Soviet-era legislature blasted by government tanks amid a rebellion in October, the new Federal Assembly will be forced to abide by a new constitution that grants Mr. Yeltsin a clear upper hand over his rivals in the legislature.

The election of a speaker, his deputies and heads of parliamentary commissions was to top the agenda at the first session. But the main reformist faction, Russia's Choice, has already clashed with opposition parties over the key issues.

Russia's Choice pulled out of informal negotiations for the speaker's chair last week, charging that the ultra-nationalist Liberal Democratic Party, the Communist Party and the Agrarian Party were plotting to take over key parliamentary committees.

In another development that cast a cloud over the scheduled session, Mr. Yeltsin's office announced Saturday that the Russian leader had yet to decide if he would address the Federal Assembly, either at a joint session or in separate sittings, as outlined in the constitution.

A provision in the new charter that the session of the Duma must be opened by the oldest deputy favoured the LPD, which was to have 68-year-old Georgy Lukhachev, an unknown philosophy professor, take the podium.

Last-minute talks were still underway to decide on a venue for the session of the 450-seat State Duma, the lower house, and the 178-strong Federation Council, the upper chamber. A spokesman for the Press Service of the Federal Assembly said deputies might be invited to the Kremlin to hold their first meeting.

Turk who shot Pope granted remission

ROME (R) — Mehmet Ali Agca, the Turk sentenced to life imprisonment for shooting Pope John Paul, has received more than a year in remission for good behaviour, Italian State Television reported. Agca, who shot the Pope in St. Peter's Square on May 13, 1981 will now be available for parole in the year 2004. Held at a maximum security jail, Agca had his sentence reduced by over two years in 1989. Agca's lawyers are currently seeking a publisher for his autobiography entitled I, Jesus Christ.

'Supernatural' tree uproots road project

KUALA LUMPUR (R) — A 100-year-old tree once housed in a Hindu temple is drawing hundreds of awed Malaysians after a crane trying to uproot it overturned, residents said Monday. Businessman P. Balakrishnan told Reuters by telephone the tree, holding up construction of a \$25 million highway project in Malaysia's southern Johor state, is believed to have supernatural powers. He said prayers have to be held before the tree can be felled. It was left standing stripped of its branches after the temple was shifted to make way for the road. The tree did not budge when the crane, capable of lifting a 30-tonne load, tried to pull it down and then overturned, the New Straits Times newspaper reported Monday.

The crane's driver has had nightmares of being attacked by cobras and has refused to work at the site. Cobras have been gathering around the tree, snarling traffic. Some offered eggs and milk to cobras, said to be living in a hole near the tree. Others seek signs to help them choose lottery numbers, the newspaper said. Hindus believe some spirits make their homes in trees and Hindu deity Lord Shiva wears a cobra around his neck.

Have briefcase, will travel

SEOUL (R) — South Korea plans to abolish its ban on overseas tourist travel for government officials, a news report said Monday. The JoongAng Daily News said the morale of civil servants would be greatly lifted if the government ban on foreign holidays was lifted. There was no official government confirmation. There is no explicit law banning overseas travel for government officials, but civil servants were last year "advised" to refrain from going abroad for holidays or on honeymoons as part of the government's frugality campaign and in a bid to cut the nation's tourism deficit.

Twin says he served time for brother

VENTURA, California (AFP) — A man who impersonated his twin brother says he voluntarily served jail terms for his sibling. But authorities discovered the scam after the brother got into trouble again. "I took my brother's place because he had all these problems," said Donald Anderson of his identical 43-year-old twin, Ronald. Donald told the Los Angeles Times. "My brother has never been in jail for a long time. I've been in jail. I could handle it." While Donald was taking Ronald's place in jail last July, authorities became suspicious when Ronald was accused of spouse abuse. Donald was released and Ronald was sentenced Wednesday to 14 years in prison for attempted murder, spousal battery and robbery. "The judge asked me why I did this. And I said my twin needed help," Donald said. Donald said he also served his brother's six-month army hitch in South Korea in the 1970s. Becoming a crew chief in a helicopter unit.

Boy scares off car thieves with toy gun

JOHANNESBURG (AFP) — A 12-year-old boy used a toy gun to scare off a pair of thieves trying to steal his mother's car in the parking lot of a shopping centre, police here said Wednesday. The boy's mother, who was not identified, had just finished putting her groceries in the trunk of the BMW when two men lunged at her and took the car keys. They were about to drive off with the car when the teenager threatened them with the toy gun and they took off running.

Hosokawa aims for vote on reforms on Jan. 19

TOKYO (Agencies) — Japan's ruling coalition will aim for a final parliamentary vote on political reforms on Jan. 19 and tackle the country's recession with a fresh stimulative package the next day, coalition officials said Monday.

Top government spokesman Masayoshi Takemura told a news conference however that wrangling within the coalition over how to finance a tax cut could delay the economic package.

The package is widely expected to include hefty cuts in income taxes, long awaited in worried business circles.

The Socialist Party, the biggest party in the coalition, opposed raising the controversial sales tax to pay for the cuts, as suggested by other coalition partners.

Coalition leaders decided on a timetable Monday for enacting Prime Minister Morihiro Hosokawa's package of political reforms.

The reforms have been stalled in the upper house of parliament since November because of delaying tactics by the opposition Liberal Democratic Party (LDP).

The coalition decided to hold expert public hearings on the package on Jan. 17 and 18 before a final vote on Jan. 19, officials said. Such hearings are a prerequisite for voting in the special committee and plenary session.

The LDP and the other opposition party, the Communists, have not agreed on the schedule. But the coalition has threatened to put it to a vote in the house where it holds a majority.

The reforms include provisions for streamlining electoral districts and imposing strict penalties on corrupt politicians. Many of the measures have been under debate for as long as five years.

Coalition officials said there was room for minor compromise with the LDP over the package, but major issues such as a blanket ban on political donations by private firms would remain unchanged.

The pro-business LDP would lose its main source of funds if the reforms are enacted.

LDP President Yohei Kono told a television talk show at the weekend that his party would no longer boycott sessions, as they have done in the last few weeks. The tactic has been much criticised.

Mr. Kono also said he would be ready to meet Mr. Hosokawa in the run-up to the final vote.

Mr. Hosokawa is planning to visit China on March 20 and 21. The Mainichi Shimbun daily reported Monday.

NEWS IN BRIEF

Kravchuk invited to Yeltsin-Clinton talks

MOSCOW (AFP) — Ukrainian President Leonid Kravchuk has been invited to join a summit meeting between U.S. President Bill Clinton and Russian leader Boris Yeltsin after Moscow and Kiev reached an agreement in principle on the future of Ukraine's nuclear arsenal, the Kremlin announced Monday. Mr. Yeltsin's press service said the Russian leader had invited Mr. Kravchuk to Friday's summit after reaching an "agreement in principle on certain important issues of shared interest, including nuclear weapons." A presidential spokesman declined to elaborate on the agreement. But Mr. Clinton has previously said that he would only meet with Mr. Kravchuk after an accord had been finalised on the dismantling of Ukraine's nuclear arsenal. Mr. Yeltsin's spokesman would only say that discussions were underway concerning several documents that the three leaders would be signing during their meeting in Moscow. On Sunday, a senior U.S. official said that Russia and Ukraine were "very close" to an agreement on the dismantling of Kiev's nuclear weapons, which were inherited from the old Soviet Union and are a source of bitter tension between both countries.

NATO offices in Rome bombed

ROME (AP) — A small bomb went off early Monday in an office complex and shattered windows of nearby NATO offices. No one was reported injured. A two-day NATO summit was to start Monday in Brussels, Belgium. No one immediately claimed responsibility for the explosion, which occurred around 1 a.m. in the Mussolini-era complex, and there were no suspects. In a statement released by his office, Premier Carlo Ciampi said the explosion showed that "terrorists and enemies of freedom are always waiting in ambush and that the free Atlantic alliance continues to be a great bulwark against their designs." Mr. Ciampi was in Brussels for the summit. The ANSA news agency said the bomb went off in a garden which gives access to offices of a NATO defence college. The blast left a 1-metre crater.

Bhutto family feud continues

KARACHI (AFP) — Another Pakistani political activist died Monday, after being shot by police, increasing the death toll from the powerful Bhutto family's political feud. Shahid Rind, 26, had received a bullet in the back while talking to Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto's estranged mother Nusrat Bhutto during a bloody clash last Wednesday which marked the 60th birth anniversary celebrations of the late Premier Zulfikar Ali Bhutto. Mr. Rind's death brought the unofficial toll from the incident to four, although police maintain that this was only the second fatality. But Nusrat, 65, reiterated Monday that two others were killed when police confronted off her ancestral home Al Murtaza in Larkana, about 340 kilometres north of here, and opened fire. Their bodies were removed by the police before they could be identified, she said.

U.K. minister quits after wife's death

LONDON (AFP) — Junior British Transport Minister Lord Cairness has resigned following his wife's sudden death. Downing Street announced. The resignation is the third to hit the government of British Prime Minister John Major since Wednesday. Lord Cairness, 45, minister for aviation and shipping, announced he wanted to spend more time with his son and daughter after he discovered the body of his wife, Diana, Saturday afternoon in the family home in Chipping Norton, Oxfordshire, west of London. Police said late Sunday: "No-one is being sought in relation to this tragic death, which is now a matter for the coroner." Unofficial sources said she had committed suicide. Environment Minister Tim Yeo, married with two grown children, was forced to resign Wednesday after revelations that he had had a child in an illicit affair. In another ethics controversy, Conservative MP Alan Duncan, 36, Saturday resigned as personal private secretary to Junior Health Minister Brian Mawhinney, a post to which he had only recently been named.

Rebels guard Gamsakhurdia's body

TBILISI (AP) — Armed supporters of former president and rebel leader Zviad Gamsakhurdia are guarding his grave at a secret location in western Georgia. Georgian leader Eduard Shevardnadze said Monday. "Nobody can be sure exactly where the body is, but the place we believe it is buried is controlled by a group of his armed followers," Mr. Shevardnadze said in his weekly radio address. The location of Gamsakhurdia's body has been a mystery since his widow announced last week that he had committed suicide on New Year's Eve after being surrounded by pro-government troops.

SAN CRISTOBAL DE LAS CASAS, Mexico (R) — A controversial church leader, agreed Sunday in a rebel quest to mediate in talks to end a peasant uprising in southern Mexico as a weekend bombing spree appeared to carry the revolt to the capital.

Samuel Ruiz, the Catholic bishop of San Cristobal de Las Casas in the conflict zone of southernmost Chiapas state, said he believed Guatemalan Nobel laureate Rigoberta Menchu would also join in the mediation effort, as requested by the rebels.

Of his own role in the possible talks, Bishop Ruiz said he agreed to take part "given the pain of our people caused by the events that have shaken Chiapas."

More than 100 people have been killed since rebels calling themselves the Zapatista National Liberation Army launched their uprising on New Year's Day by seizing six towns in the impoverished state.

Several bombs exploded in the Mexico City area over the weekend after the rebels threatened to take their fight to the capital. One person was injured by a car bomb explosion.

Bombs exploded near a communications tower in Chiapas Sunday night and explosions damaged an electrical tower in the state of Mexico near the capital, the Mexican News Agency, Notimex, reported.

No one claimed responsibility for the explosions.

Notimex did not say whether the communications tower of television Azteca had been damaged after two sets of bombs exploded in the area near Tenelapa at 9 p.m. local time (0300 GMT).

Nor did it describe the extent of damage at the Federal Electric Commission Tower in Texcoco in the state of Mexico. Three explosions occurred near the tower at 30 minute intervals early Sunday afternoon, Notimex said.

The Zapatistas faxed offers to begin a public dialogue to Mexican news organisations Friday and requested the mediation of Bishop Ruiz, Mr. Menchu and Julio Scherer, editor of the respected Mexican weekly news magazine Proceso. Scherer could not be reached for comment.

"We ask them to respond publicly to our offer... and mediate in the dialogue between the poor people in their struggle and their executives," the fax said, according to published reports.

"There are glimmers of hope for a peaceful resolution," Bishop Ruiz said in his Sunday homily.

He later told reporters that it was Ms. Menchu — a Mayan Indian who won the 1992 Nobel Peace — who first informed him of the rebel call for his mediation effort and said he believed she too would participate.

"From the tenor of the conversation my impression was that Rigoberta Menchu was

happy... She was euphoric about this," Bishop Ruiz said.

The government, which has demanded the rebels renounce violence and lay down their arms, had no immediate comment.

President Carlos Salinas de Gortari named a commission Saturday to "facilitate dialogue with the diverse sectors" in Chiapas, site of the biggest uprising in Mexico in more than 20 years.

It was unclear whether the commission would have the authority to negotiate with the Zapatistas. But commission member Eduardo Rubledo, a senator for the ruling Institutional Revolutionary Party, would not rule this out.

"We will be in communication with whoever asks for us," Sen. Rubledo said in response to a question about contacts with the guerrillas.

The Defence Ministry said in a statement that an army base on the outskirts of this colonial Chiapas City had come under sporadic rebel rifle fire for the eighth day running Sunday but that the attackers had been repelled.

Government troops in the town of Ocosingo, a scene of heavy fighting in the first days of the uprising, had also been harassed by sniper fire, the statement said.

It revealed one more military death, raising the official toll of troops, rebels and civilians killed in the fighting so far to 103. The ministry said 61 rebels have been killed, a fi-

gure that has not varied for the last four days.

Bishop Ruiz, 69, has fought relentlessly over the last 34 years for the rights of Chiapas' indigenous peoples, attacking the power of local ranchers and condemning persistent human rights abuses by the army and police.

But critics, including some within his own ranks, say he has gone too far, effectively becoming a political activist linked to groups involved in a series of land invasions and allegedly behind the insurrection.

Some of Bishop Ruiz's priests and lay preachers scattered around the conflict zones of Chiapas have been accused by the government of participating directly in the guerrilla campaign. Bishop Ruiz dismisses the claims.

Meanwhile, a Guatemalan rebel leader, in Mexico City for peace talks with the Guatemalan government, denied any links between Guatemalan guerrillas and the peasant revolt. Notimex said Sunday.

"These are false declarations to create disinformation and a climate of confusion," Rodrigo Asturias, a commander of the Guatemalan National Revolutionary Unit (UNRG), was quoted as saying.

Representatives from the UNRG and the Guatemalan government began a meeting in Mexico City Thursday aimed at restarting formal negotiations to end a 33-year civil conflict that has taken an estimated 100,000 lives.

Edberg wins Qatar Open title

DOHA (Agencies) — Sweden's Stefan Edberg clinched his first title for nine months Sunday when he brushed aside Holland's Paul Haarhuis in the final of the Qatar Open Tennis Tournament 6-3, 6-2 in a one-sided final.

Edberg, the world No. 5 and the No. 3 seed here, took just 74 minutes to overwhelm the Dutchman, ranked at 42 in the world, to clinch the \$71,000 first prize.

Haarhuis, who beat No. 4 seed Goran Ivanisevic of Croatia in the semifinals, went away with \$42,000 after only his second appearance in a major final.

Edberg hadn't won a title since the Madrid clay court crown in April. But he said the victory was a timely boost to his chances of lifting his third Australian Open title when the Grand Slam tournament gets under way in Melbourne on Jan. 17.

"It's a good sign winning here," Edberg said. "He's still world class. He has a chance to win in Australia," said the Dutchman.

The final was controlled by Edberg from start to finish. He gained the only break of the first set in the eighth game and went on to win in 34 minutes.

He won a further two breaks in the second to race into a 4-0 lead before his opponent staged a late rally. But it was too late for the dispirited Haarhuis.

"I would have liked to have got a draw," joked Haarhuis. "I tried to go past him, through him and even over him, but nothing worked."

The year-ending ATP World Championship, staged indoors in Frankfurt in November, could be held in the Gulf Arab state of Qatar in 1996.

The Qatar Tennis and Squash Federation said Sunday it had been in contact with the ATP over staging the tournament which features the world's top eight players.

The contract between the ATP and Frankfurt expires in November 1995.

Alli Al Fardan, head of the Qatar Federation, said the ATP wanted the tournament to be played outdoors and that the climate in Qatar in November would be ideal.

"We are in serious discussions with the ATP and we are hopeful that we can reach a deal," he said.



Runner-up Paul Haarhuis (left) receives his Qatar Open trophy from Ali Al Fardan, head of the Qatar Tennis and Squash Federation. Haarhuis lost in the final to Swede Stefan Edberg (AFP photo)

opinion Edberg is still one of the top players in the world. "He's still world class. He has a chance to win in Australia," said the Dutchman.

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Police hope to identify Kerrigan's attacker

DETROIT (AP) — Investigators hope to get a better look at the man who attacked figure skater Nancy Kerrigan by sending a videotape of him to a laboratory.

"If we get a clear picture of the person, that would definitely be a step in the right direction," deputy police chief Benny Napoleon said.

The videotape was taken Thursday by a cameraman for Intersport, a Chicago-based production company, seconds before the attack, and shows the attacker squatting near the skater when Kerrigan pulls it open as she walked off the skating rink, Napoleon said.

"You can see his face," Napoleon said. "You can see his eyes. You can see his nose. You can see his mouth."

Grace and Wild Studios Inc. in Farmington Hills, a private laboratory, will attempt to clarify the shot through digital enhancement, Napoleon said.

He said he was unsure how long that will take.

He said police would wait until then to distribute the videotape of the man.

On Sunday, a videotape technician from Olympia Arenas, which operates Joe Louis Arena, determined that the attacker was white, Napoleon said.

On Saturday, police released two composite drawings of the man because four witnesses described him as white and two described him as black.

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NEWS IN BRIEF

Seles comeback imminent — Shriver

SYDNEY (R) — Monica Seles is likely to return to top-level tennis within the next four to seven weeks, according to Women's Tennis Association President Pam Shriver.

Shriver said she had spoken to Seles before Christmas and revealed the former world number one had known at least a fortnight ago she would not be travelling to the Australian Open later this month.

"The obvious time for her to return is between mid-Feb and mid-March, before the Lipton Championship," said Shriver, agreeing that the Virginia Slims of Chicago tournament starting on Feb. 7 was the earliest a Seles comeback could be expected.

"When I spoke to her, she knew she wouldn't play here... To miss nine months and then start with a Grand Slam would have been tough. She'll probably make a decision about which tournament to enter four or five days before the event."

Shriver said the women's game had greatly missed Seles since the stabbing incident in Germany last April which has kept her sidelined ever since. After losing in three sets to fellow American Kimberly Po in the first round of the New South Wales Open, Shriver also said her own days as a singles player were numbered.

"I can see the finish line," she said. "It's just a dilemma to say when the end will come."

Becker faces sanctions

DOHA (AFP) — The professional tennis ruling body has demanded that Boris Becker substantiate claims that drug abuse is widespread in the game.

Association of Tennis Players Executive Vice President Larry Scott said here Sunday that the German tennis star would be queried sometime in the next two weeks over the claims. Scott, speaking at the Doha ATP Tournament, said he was "shocked" by Becker's outburst.

The former Wimbledon champion could be sanctioned if he fails to provide proof. Becker told the Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung newspaper in December that he believed cocaine, amphetamines and marijuana were widely used by players. He said the fact that no player had been punished was "a joke."

The player is currently taking a two week break from the tour as his first child is expected later this week. But the ATP vice president said a transcript of the interview was already being studied and that Becker would be interviewed. "Our chief executive Mark Miles will talk to Becker and give him the chance to substantiate the allegations," said Scott.

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Pele reiterates friendly tone to Havelange

RIO DE JANEIRO (AP) — Soccer legend Pele continued to offer an olive branch to FIFA president and fellow Brazilian Joao Havelange, praising him in an interview despite being banned from the World Cup draw last month.

"It's a goal I didn't make," Pele said in an interview Sunday in Rio daily Jornal Do Brasil. "It hasn't change my life one bit."

Pele, who played for the North American Soccer League's New York Cosmos from 1975-78 in the United States and worked to bring the World Cup to America, was barred from the official draw ceremony in Las Vegas by Havelange because of a dispute between Pele and Havelange's son-in-law, Brazilian Federation President Ricardo Teixeira.

Pele accused Teixeira in a November interview in the Brazilian edition of Playboy magazine of demanding a million-dollar bribe to award television rights to the Brazilian National Championship to Pele's sports promotion company.

"Pele's accusations against my son-in-law hurt me deeply," Havelange said. Teixeira has sued Pele for libel, but Pele's lawyers said they had proof of the bribe charges they will present in court.

In Sunday's interview, Pele reiterated his statements made on draw day that he was not angry with Havelange, praising his administration of FIFA.

"Havelange is a successful administrator because he does business transactions open, for everyone to see," he said. "Havelange has made FIFA a winner with his honesty."

Pele was barred from the draw despite media criticism of Havelange and even internal pleas by FIFA and World Cup USA officials to allow Pele to be part of the draw.

On a related matter, Pele said he was saddened by a wider corruption scandal of rigged games in Rio state soccer.

"The guilty must be tried and convicted," he said. "The reputation of Brazilian soccer is at stake."

The Rio Soccer Federation in December was rocked when referees charged a national championship qualifying game had been rigged and that they were instructed to "fix" games in the 1994 city championship.

The Rio referee director was suspended and Rio games were removed from the national soccer lottery. Police are investigating charges that up to 17 referees participated as a "shock troop" in rigging games as directed by the administration of Rio Soccer.

There traditional powerhouses — Flamengo, Fluminense, and Botafogo — formed a renegade league last week to gain credibility.

European soccer roundup European Soccer legends face jeers and humiliation

PARIS (AFP) — Footballing legends AC Milan and Real Madrid were the butt of renewed jeers and insults at the weekend.

In Italy, AC Milan were again hopelessly out of touch as they were held to a goalless home draw by bottom-of-the-table Lecce inside a rain-drenched San Siro Stadium.

And in Spain former champions Real Madrid were humiliated 5-0 by bitter rivals Barcelona.

AC Milan's latest slip, just a few days after an identical result against Udinese, left them just two points clear of Sampdoria who turned on a magical display to crush Napoli 4-1 in a match in which both sides missed penalties.

Roberto Mancini put the issue beyond doubt when he found the Napoli net twice in the last five minutes. Lombardio opened the scoring in the 34th minutes and Ruud Gullit notched up his 11th goal of the season five minutes into the second-half.

England captain David Platt could have made it even worse for the visitors but his penalty was saved by Giuseppe Tagliatela. Meanwhile at the other end Gianluca Pagliuca also pulled off a spectacular save to stop Daniel Fonseca's spot-kick.

In fact a 1960 league record was equalled when two other penalties were also saved. Udinese's Graziano Bantistini denied Parma's Thomas Broggi and Piacenza's Massimo Taibi stopped an effort from Torino's Andrea Silenzi.

Milan's traditional rivals Juventus could have moved to within one point of the leaders. But they were held 1-1 at Cremonese. Roberto Baggio put Juventus ahead with his 11th league goal of the campaign, but Cremonese equalised just before half time through Marco Giandebiagi.

To round off a great day for the Serie A's strugglers, Udinese beat Parma 1-0 and Reggiana beat Inter Milan by the same scoreline.

England international Paul Gascoigne played superbly, although he had to wear a specially-made bandage for a fractured rib. But his performance did not prevent his Lazio side crashing 4-1 at Foggia.

Barcelona's dramatic demolition of Real Madrid in front of 115,000 delirious fans inside Nou Camp was spearheaded by Romario. The Brazilian forward, who has responded well after an eye operation, recaptured his popularity with the home crowd by scoring a hat-trick.

Real Madrid had no answers to the slick-moving Barcelona side. And there is little doubt that in their glory days Real's coach Benito Floro would have been sacked on the spot, but with the club's coffers empty there is little sign of anything so drastic happening.

The other Barcelona came from Durruti stadium. Ronald Katter and Ivan Zamora scored two goals in a five-minute blitz each side of half-time to beat visiting Logrones.

Sporting Gijon were beaten 3-0 at Real Zaragoza after having Luis Sierra and Juanes sent off in the first half an hour. Athletic Bilbao were held 0-0 in the Basque derby against Real Sociedad but moved up into third place above Gijon on goal difference.

Both teams have 22 points, three behind Barcelona, who are two behind Deportivo. Sevilla gave away a two goal lead to end with a 3-2 draw against Albacete and Atletico Madrid were held 0-0 by bottom of the table Lersa.

In Portugal Sporting missed a golden opportunity of closing the gap on rivals Benfica at the top of the Portuguese first division this weekend when they were held to a surprise 1-1 draw at struggling Famalicao.

Benfica fought a goalless draw at home against Gil Vicente to retain a three-point lead.

Kidderminster, who may be forced to switch their tie against Preston because of redevelopment work at their ground, were cautious about the draw.

United won 2-0 at Carrow Road on the opening day of the season but were beaten 2-1 on their last F.A. Cup visit, a fifth-round clash in February 1991.

Bookmakers acknowledged the difficult task facing United when they pushed them out from 4-1 to 9-2 favourites.

One intriguing tie — Plymouth at home to Barnsley — pitches former Nottingham Forest team mates Peter Shilton and Viv Anderson together as opposing managers.

Conference League leaders

Man. United play Norwich in F.A. Cup

LONDON (Agencies) — Manchester United's hopes of completing an English league and cup double were made much tougher Sunday when they were drawn away to Norwich in the top tie of the fourth round of the F.A. Cup.

Third-round giantkillers Kidderminster Harriers, who beat Birmingham City, and Stockport County, who knocked out Premier League Queen's Park Rangers, were both banded home ties.

Non-league Kidderminster play third division Preston while second division Stockport were given a plum tie against Liverpool if the Merseyside Giants can beat Bristol City in a re-match of their abandoned third-round tie.

Stockport last reached round four in 1965 when their opponents were Liverpool. They drew 1-1, with Liverpool winning the replay 2-0 and going on to beat Leeds in the final.

Holders Arsenal, who visit Millwall for their third-round tie, were drawn away to the winners of the Bolton-Everton third-round replay.

The only other non-league side, Bath City, will travel to Premier League strugglers Oldham if they beat first division Stoke in their replay.

Norwich, who lost their manager Mike Walker this week to Everton, welcomed the tie against the league lead-

ers and cup favourites. Captain Ian Butterworth said: "This is the tie of the round, we will be facing the best team in England and there will be a great atmosphere. Everyone will be bubbling for that one."

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Conference League leaders

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NEWS IN BRIEF

Evangelical Local Church recognised

AMMAN (J.T.) — The Jordanian government has granted formal recognition to the Evangelical Local Church in Amman and Jordan, according to parish Pastor Nu'man Smir. He told the Jordan Times Monday that the government sent representatives to attend the inauguration of the new church, in western Amman, held at the weekend under the auspices of Bishop Naim Khouri. He said visitors and guests from the occupied territories and Jordan attended the ceremony.

Arab funds discuss aid for Palestinians

ABU DHABI (AP) — Directors of Arab funds met Monday to coordinate financial support for the Gaza Strip and Jericho. Arab states and the oil Gulf states in particular are expected to play a major role in rebuilding the badly damaged infrastructure and economy in the self-rule areas laid out in the Israeli-Palestinian peace accord. The three-day meeting will discuss cooperation among these funds over contribution to the \$2 billion world aid package agreed upon by the international community following the conclusion of the pact Sept. 13. The meeting, presided by Khalifa Al Meheiri, director general of the Abu Dhabi Fund for Development, comprises representatives of the Arab Fund for Economic and Social Development, the Arab Monetary Fund, the Arab Bank for Development in Africa, OPEC fund, the Islamic Development Fund and national funds of the United Arab Emirates, Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman and Qatar.

Mother pleads for news of her lost son

JENIN, occupied West Bank (AFP) — A Palestinian mother has appealed for news of her son and nephew missing in action (MIA) during the 1967 Middle East war, as a U.S. congressional team tours the region investigating the fate of six Israeli MIA's. "They were both soldiers in the Jordanian army. They were captured by the Israeli army and then disappeared," Communist deputy Hashem Mahmood wrote in a letter to Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin. The mother, Saada Ibrahim Al Haja, from the occupied West Bank town of Jericho, long believed her son Hazmi and nephew Hafez were in Atlit jail in northern Israel. The prison service told her they were in Jordan, but Palestinians then told her they were in Atlit. Mahmood told AFP on Monday that hope had returned after a friend of the family thought he heard a message from Hazmi to the family read out in a request programme in Arabic on Israel Radio. "She then came to me to try to find him and the military authorities have promised a reply in a month," Mr. Mahmood said. "Dozens of Palestinians have no news of their relatives who disappeared in the 1967 war," he said.

Turkey-Iraq pipeline talks 'inconclusive'

ANKARA (AFP) — Turkey and Iraq held talks on the removal of oil from pipelines linking the two states that have been blocked since the Gulf crisis but without any early agreement, a Turkish diplomat said Monday. The discussions here Sunday focused on the possible removal of some eight to nine million barrels of crude oil owned by both Iraq and Turkey but stuck in the Turkish section of the two pipelines. "It was a meeting to raise the issue. Now we must wait for the Iraqi authorities' viewpoint," said the diplomat. He said there was no early agreement.

Russia says it arrested 20 spies in 1993

MOSCOW (AP) — The former KGB arrested 20 people for espionage in 1993 and foiled several attempts by foreign spies to recruit top officials around President Boris Yeltsin, Russian intelligence agents claimed Monday. Among those arrested were five spies from Georgia and one from Estonia, despite treaties among the former Soviet republics promising not to engage in espionage against each other, said Sergei Stepashin, first deputy director of Russia's new federal counter-intelligence service.

Sudan rebels say rivals poised to attack

NAIROBI (AFP) — A Sudanese rebel leader Monday accused a rival insurgent group of preparing to attack his forces despite a ceasefire agreement between the two factions. Riek Machar, leader of a breakaway group of the Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA), said the government was also massing troops for a new offensive against the southern rebels. Fighting reportedly erupted between rebels and government forces near the Ugandan border last week, but details were unclear. Mr. Riek told AFP that John Garang, chief of the mainstream SPLA faction, was preparing an attack despite a new agreement between the rival rebel factions to conduct joint negotiations with Khartoum.

Palestine and Israel in sports first

TOKYO (AFP) — Palestine and Israel clashed head-on in sports for the first time when Mohammad Al Turk played Yaniv Sharon in a singles match at the Global Youth Table Tennis championships here Monday. "I don't mind that I lost, because it was a match for peace and sports," Turk said after losing 4-11, 8-11, 7-11, 6-11 in the preliminary round. Palestine were invited by International Table Tennis Federation President Iehito Ogimura following the signing of the peace accord by the Palestine Liberation Organisation and Israel four months ago.

3 Algerian parties agree on joint platform

ALGIERS (AFP) — Three of Algeria's main political parties have drawn up a joint political platform in the run-up to national conference in this guerrilla war-torn country later this month, officials said Monday. The former sole ruling National Liberation Front (FLN), the Movement for Democracy in Algeria led by ex-President Ahmad Ben Bella, and Sheikh Abdullah Djiballah's Islamic Renaissance Movement (Miri Al Nahda) reached agreement on Sunday. They have submitted their programme to the collegiate presidency, the High State Committee and the government-appointed national dialogue commission, in preparation for the conference on Jan. 25 and 26.

Syriac Christian priest seized in Turkey

ANKARA (R) — A Syriac Christian priest has been kidnapped from a minibus in southeastern Turkey, where a Kurdish revolt is raging, a church official said Monday. "Priest Melki Tok was kidnapped on Sunday by two gunmen in a car who followed the passenger minibus he was travelling on," said the official, who asked not to be named. Mr. Tok, in his sixties, had conducted Sunday services at the Syriac Orthodox village of Ogunduk and was going to Haberli village to officiate at a wedding when he was seized. The villages are in Sirnak province, a frequent flashpoint in the fighting between government troops and separatist guerrillas of the Kurdish Labour Party (PKK).

Kahane followers beat American journalist

OCCUPIED JERUSALEM (AP) — Militant Jewish settlers on Monday beat up an American journalist who they thought sullied the reputation of assassinated Rabbi Meir Kahane. Robert Friedman, a freelance whose work appeared frequently in the Village Voice, was leaving the Tapuah settlement in the northern West Bank when five armed residents jumped him and started hitting him and kicking him, he said. "One guy was built like a truck, but the others were wimps and fought like girls," Mr. Friedman said, calling the attack inept. "We defended ourselves and got out of there," Mr. Friedman was with Mitch Pilger, a journalist with the Jerusalem Post.

Ancient statue head unearthed

AMMAN (J.T.) — An eight-month-old excavation programme going on at the Nymphaeum near the old market place in downtown Amman has resulted in the unearthing of a second large head of a statue that used to decorate the Roman site more than 2,000 years ago, Minister of Tourism and Antiquities Mohammad Adwan has announced.

During a tour of the excavation site accompanied by Dr. Safwan Tell, director-general of the department of antiquities and Amman Mayor Mamdouh Al Abbadi, Dr. Adwan thanked the municipality for its cooperation with the Department of Antiquities. Dr. Tell told the Jordan Times that the head of the new-found statue dates back to second century A.D. and was the second in two months to be unearthed at the same site. "We are still looking for other heads and the rest of the statues which used to decorate the Nymphaeum areas at the time of the Romans. Each of the heads is believed to be of



statues at least three metres high," Dr. Tell said.

According to Dr. Tell, the digs conducted so far by the department teams resulted in the discovery of most of the ancient site and the unearthing of columns and living quarters which had been built on the remains of the old Nymphaeum during the Byzantine Umayyad, Abbasid and Mamlauk eras.

No plan yet for regional economic talks in Amman

By P.V. Vivekanand
Jordan Times Staff Reporter

AMMAN — No plans have been finalised for Amman to host a regional conference on economic cooperation grouping Arabs and non-Arabs as well as Israel, and the fate of the proposal for such a forum depends on the course of Arab-Israeli peace negotiations, an informed official source said Monday. The source also said Jordan would not consider any Israeli overtures in the context of the Kingdom's territory before the Jewish state unconditionally withdraws from occupied Jordanian land.

"We want our land back, and that is our priority," said the source, referring to nearly 550 square kilometres of Jordanian territory now under Israeli occupation. Commenting on a report in the Israeli newspaper Haaretz that the Jewish state was proposing to lease part of the Jordanian territory as part of a peace agreement, the source said: "It is their idea, not ours." He did not elaborate. The source, who preferred anonymity, said reports that Amman would be hosting a regional economic conference in April were too premature.

"Yes, the idea has been discussed, but it is too early to talk about it because the whole thing depends on political negotiations," said the source. "We have not even reached the stage of discussing a date."

The source was commenting on remarks attributed to Israeli Foreign Minister Shimon Peres that such a conference would be held in Amman in April and that Israel

will be attending. The source confirmed that Israel had brought up the proposal in the course of peace negotiations and that it talked about "3,000 to 4,000 people attending it."

U.S. Secretary of State Warren Christopher told reporters in Amman following talks with His Majesty King Hussein on Dec. 6 that among the topics he discussed with the King was also an idea for such a conference under the auspices of the joint Jordanian-American-Israeli economic working group set up during His Royal Highness Crown Prince Hassan's visit to Washington in October.

According to Mr. Christopher, the trilateral committee "is something that we all depend upon in the future to provide an economic spark for this region."

"We discussed a number of options such as the possible calling of conferences in the trade and investment area," he said.

However, he explained, "it is an idea that is simply in the process of exploration. There were no particular figures used about such a conference."

The Jerusalem Post quoted Mr. Peres as telling the executive bureau of the Israeli Histadrut labour federation on Thursday that the conference was intended to encourage investments in the region after a peace settlement has been reached.

Mr. Peres was quoted in the report as saying the gathering would deal with, among other things, setting up a "peace valley" along the "Syrian-African" rift running from the Syrian-Israeli border

der in the north to Eilat on the Red Sea in the south, a "joint Jordanian-Israeli international airport," and building a highway between Egypt and Jordan via Eilat.

Jordanian officials have confirmed that these projects were discussed as ideas during meetings of the multi-lateral working group on regional economic cooperation, but that Jordan insisted that these could be tackled only after the basic issues of conflict — territory, water and refugees — were satisfactorily addressed.

According to the Post, the conference would be organised by the U.S. Council of Foreign Affairs and the Swiss Davos company.

The concerned government, Mr. Peres was quoted as saying, would provide the guarantees while the private sector would provide the projects and that President Bill Clinton "warmly recommended the holding of the conference."

The Post reported that a joint committee formed by the Israeli finance and foreign ministries is already "planning the projects Israel is to present at the conference, including power plans, pipe laying, roads, ports and others."

Jordan has said that while it was willing to consider joint projects considered vital to advancing the peace process, overall economic cooperation on a wider scale could come only after a comprehensive peace settlement has been reached.

Jordan also opposes any consideration of lifting of the Arab economic boycott of Israel before a settlement is worked out.

U.S. team visits Lebanon to probe fate of Israelis

CHTAURA, Lebanon (AP) — A U.S. congressional team trying to determine the fate of six missing Israeli servicemen travelled Monday under heavy security to east Lebanon, the third leg of their humanitarian mission.

The three-man delegation headed by Michael van Dusen, chief of staff of the House of Representatives Foreign Affairs Committee, was driven in a four-car motorcade from Damascus to the Lebanese border checkpoint at Masnaa at 10.30 a.m. (0630 GMT). At the border crossing, about 100 heavily armed Lebanese troops in 20 military vehicles joined the motorcade, which drove into the Syrian-controlled Bekaa Valley.

A Lebanese security source, speaking on condition of anonymity, told reporters the staff team headed for the village of Sultan Yaqoub. Three of the Israelis went missing in a tank battle with the Syrian army in Sultan Yaqoub on June 11, 1982, five days after Israel invaded Lebanon.

The Lebanese army had stationed two M-113 armoured personnel carriers and six jeeps in the village, about 15

kilometres from Masnaa, to guard the visiting Americans. The team was later expected to drive to Beirut for talks with Lebanese officials.

A Shi'ite Muslim faction holding two Israeli soldiers has refused to meet with the Americans, charging the U.S. was biased towards Israel.

"We have previously declared our position that the United States is not qualified to play such a humanitarian role because it is a close partner with Israel in its continued aggression against Lebanon," said Sheikh Hassan Navrallah, leader of the Iranian-backed Hizbollah.

Sheikh Nasrallah spoke in Damascus Sunday after a three-hour meeting with Vice-President Abdul Halim Khaddam of Syria, the main power broker in Lebanon.

However, there has not been any open denial by Hizbollah that Syrian mediators were working as middlemen between the two sides.

Last month, Syrian President Hafez Al Assad promised U.S. Secretary of State Warren Christopher when he visited Damascus to extend help to the U.S. team to establish the fate of the missing Israelis.

Majali blames media for continued strain in Jordan-Gulf ties

By Nermeen Murad
Jordan Times Staff Reporter

AMMAN — Prime Minister Abdul Salam Majali Monday blamed the Jordanian media for continued strains in relations between the Kingdom and Gulf states as well as what he described as "wrestling" between the government and Parliament.

"Unfortunately, I say it clearly, the Jordan media play a part in not getting this relations back (with Gulf states)," Dr. Majali told reporters in response to a question about Arab-Arab relations.

"Everytime we almost get it back, a couple of articles go in some of the media and it becomes strained again," Dr. Majali said.

In response to another question about whether the government will work to upgrade and facilitate the institutions of democracy such as Parliament, Dr. Majali said that the media was also a reason behind the tension between his Cabinet and Parliament in an obvious reference to the grueling confidence session in December.

"The tension was drawn by the media," the prime minister said, adding that an article appeared which caused tension that had not existed until its publication. The prime minister was most probably referring to comments ahead of the confidence session that described the newly elected deputies as "docile."

Asked why his government had a "tug of war over freedom of expression" with the Jordanian media in general, Dr. Majali said that this was not true and that he did not think there was tension between the two. But he added that "sometimes" the media "takes a little thing and they don't study it properly and then blow it" out of all proportions.

The prime minister explained that while the Kingdom's relations with Gulf states, and especially Saudi Arabia and Kuwait, were improving, they continued to

face setbacks because of critical opinion pieces or reports in the press.

He said his government had received communiques from Gulf states protesting the criticism in the Jordanian media and are unconvinced that the government is not behind the reports.

"A couple of articles come up, the second day we get into trouble over them — the second day, it does not even go to the third," the premier added. "They think that we have control over the media, that we tell you what to write and what not to write. And you know this is not true," the premier said.

"We hope that the media would take this concern into account, do they want this relation to be back, then they could help it return rather than to stir things against it."

He said that while the Kingdom was gratified by the success of its goodwill overtures with the United Arab Emirates and Qatar he hoped that the same will happen with Saudi Arabia.

"We hope our relations with Saudi Arabia would improve," Dr. Majali said, adding that contacts between the two countries "are good now but have not reached the level we want."

"We are trying to ask the media to please stop adding oil to the fire," Dr. Majali said, adding that "nothing is going to change if we keep criticising them. But the situation will change if we meet them and talk to them."

Dr. Majali also criticised the United States and other Western countries for failing to facilitate reconciliation between Jordan and the Gulf Arab states.

"Western countries, including the United States, have not been doing enough to mend Jordan's relations with other Arabs," Dr. Majali said.

"We know that Egypt is trying its best," he said. "But the West is not, and I do not know whether that is because of a bad feeling about what has taken place during the Gulf war."

Two held for contempt of State Security Court

AMMAN (AP) — Two men were arrested Monday after going on a rampage accusing the State Security Court of bias in the trial of 10 men suspected of attempting to assassinate the King.

The two men, identified as Jihad and Nabil Shdeifat, were cited for contempt of court — a charge that normally carries a six-month prison term.

The two men, relatives of one of the defendants standing trial in the sedition case, were not sentenced by the three-man tribunal, headed by Colonel Hafez Amin, because the military court has no jurisdiction over civil cases.

The Shdeifat's interrupted the court proceedings by shouting at Col. Amir and accusing him of "bias" and "injustice."

They walked out of the courtroom and smashed windows at the entrance of the building. They were joined by at least another 20 men and engaged in a brief fist fight with police. It was not immediately clear whether the other men were arrested.

The episode occurred as the court heard a state witness deny allegations by defendants in the sedition plot case that their confessions were extracted under torture.

The state witness, a prosecution clerk, told the tribunal "no coercion was used during prosecution interrogation, which was only attended by me, the prosecutor and the

defendants."

The defendants have alleged that security officers were present when they gave their confessions to Prosecutor Muhammad Hijazi, an army major.

They also told the court that they were subject to severe physical and psychological duress during interrogation by security officers.

The statements, obtained during three months of detention at the General Intelligence Department, is the pillar of the prosecution's case.

But the defendants retracted their earlier confessions in court and entered innocent pleas at the outset of the trial, which began Sept. 9.

Under standing orders of the court, the defendants and witnesses could not be identified by name in media reports. Two of the accused are being tried in absentia.

Five military cadets, a member of a Royal Guard unit and four others, including the two fugitives, are charged with plotting to assassinate the monarch to pave the way for a takeover of power by the illegal Hezb Al Tahrir group.

Hezb Al Tahrir, a putative group established in the early 1950s, does not recognise any of the existing Arab governments and calls for the establishment of an Islamic caliphate.

Monday's four-hour session was adjourned until Sunday, when the court will issue its verdict.

Jordan backs independent Palestine

(Continued from page 1)

breakthrough in Syrian-Israeli negotiations could reflect positively on the Jordanian, Palestinian and Lebanese talks with Israel if only by "raising the tempo of negotiations."

The prime minister said that one of the positive results of positive progress in the Middle East talks could be tapped at a scheduled Washington meeting between His Majesty King Hussein and President Clinton in the last third of this month.

The King left Jordan for a short private visit to Britain

Sunday before he heads for the U.S. where he will undergo routine medical checkups and later meet President Clinton.

The meeting, which will take place after the Syrian-American summit in Geneva, will centre on the progress of the peace talks and bilateral issues, Dr. Majali said.

Asked what results Jordan expected from the King's meeting with Mr. Clinton, he said that the Kingdom hoped for "continuous support of the (Jordanian) economy and defence forces as well as debt reduction."

COLUMN

Clinton takes pre-dawn jog in Brussels

BRUSSELS (AFP) — U.S. President Bill Clinton was up at 0500 GMT here Monday to prepare for a NATO summit with a pre-dawn jog of about four kilometres in a local park. Resplendent in a white tracksuit and surrounded by half-a-dozen security guards, he jogged twice around the lake in Bois De La Cambre Park — a run which took a little less than half an hour. Mr. Clinton waved a cheery "good morning" to reporters, but had nothing more to say ahead of a gruelling day that was due to start with a meeting between the president and Manfred Woerner, German secretary general of the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO). On the heels of that meeting was a two-summit of the 16-nation alliance, which was focused on increasing security links with Eastern Europe but falling short of extending any NATO security guarantee to countries of the region.

Argentine town rocked by suicides

BUENOS AIRES (AFP) — A quiet town in central Argentina has been rocked by the suicides of six teenagers in the past three months, Buenos Aires newspapers have reported. The tragedy has unfolded in Villa Gobernador Galvez, a once-thriving industrial centre that has fallen on hard times, with 30 per cent unemployment and 30 per cent of the population living below the poverty line. In four of the cases, youths shot themselves with guns they found at home. The latest one occurred Friday, when a 15-year-old boy took his own life. That same day a 14-year-old girl shot herself but lived. Police sought to play down speculation that a Satanic cult might be behind the suicides, saying there was no such group in the town. And social workers said the six youths who killed themselves did not come from particularly poor families, blaming the suicide, instead, on communications problems between them and their parents.

4 officers injured in mosque brawl

NEW YORK (AP) — Four police officers responding to a report of a robbery at a mosque were injured in a brawl with worshippers. One officer's gun was taken during the scuffle, and another officer's radio was grabbed, said Officer Merri Pearsall, a police spokeswoman. Both officers were recovered by police, she said. No arrests were immediately made. Officer Pearsall said four officers responded to the robbery report at Muhammad's Mosque around 4 p.m. "They entered the mosque, a scuffle takes place just inside the entrance," she said. "They were confronted by a large group, which really didn't want them in there." One of the officers was pushed down a flight of stairs and suffered back and neck injuries. Officer Pearsall said. She was taken to New York Hospital and was in stable condition. Another officer suffered a possible broken nose, a third had a bruise on his forehead and the fourth officer's injuries were not immediately known. They also were taken to New York hospital.

Cancer boy still receives 10,000 letters a day

LONDON (R) — A British boy who entered the record books after receiving 16 million get-well cards when suffering from cancer, still receives 10,000 messages of support a day even though he overcame the disease several years ago. The Sunday Telegraph reported that the front garden of Craig Shergold's house was covered in mail bags every day, waiting for his parents to sort through the flood of letters. Such is the weight of mail that Craig, 14, has been allocated an official post code, which is normally given to large towns or countries. Craig, who had a brain tumour removed when he was one, became a minor celebrity in Britain in the late 1980s after he set himself the goal of receiving the most letters in history.